

Tallulah

Does the watered-down wolf think they're alive,
the snow figures, when cold gives them form for a few hours?

She sure isn't taking any chances, her headlong
leap cut by leash. She's right. What's reliable? Yesterday's

"bodies" are mostly sticks and foam, but she strains for them
as they were, before towing me, the putative authority,

to another body of water,
an imposter thaw so persuasive
none of us
can distinguish it from Spring.

Chiro and the Wildlife People

(from a friend's to-do list)

Sometimes you can go
see the ones you need
or they say they're going to show up,

but that's tomorrow. One difficult
animal at a time: your spine,
those birds that won't stop nesting

above the cars and the equipment
left from the man of the house,

by which I mean
he was the only man; when
he died, it was like history,
disaster, after which only the women are left.

You had to become a son.
That change bends the spine; I know.

Over time, the birds, and nomads
in the apartment building,
like me, moving in.

There's no love
here, you said once,
only possession—

Maybe that's why
you, if your sister's right,
encouraged the birds,
but who can know
the consequences
of invitation. Some

leave absolutely
to even out
those who overstay. My
own missing tribe—

maybe they
had a better
offer elsewhere?

Laureate

The old poet came to visit us the last year we were in school. She didn't seem to mind that our rooms were on wheels. The books were already decades late at the library. Last call, the bus drivers were calling from the foliage, their vehicles always peaking. Why are you bothering that woman? Can't you see she's dead? Wait, I said. Look. A fog the color of her soft hair was filling the auditorium. The dais was rattling.

Guy Fawkes Day

1

On Guy Fawkes Day to start the diet from daylight

The hour re-parking like a truck some civic ordinance made move from

One side of the street to the opposite agreed we slept when

Whoever vanished last night dropped their coupons

Their train passes their identity cards their Discovery credit offers

Their mouth blindfolds that let only the looks be seen

Whoever said the face is the house of the senses

Should see how other face-senses curtained now

Not only the light the skim milk of daybreak rationed & the fruit of the black walnut tree

Some easy to mistake for shit but some lime as tennis balls

2

Secrets be kept from us but the breath also especially suspect

Say: now my breath is visible

(Cold making a smoker a vaper of everyone)

Say: now I lay me down to hunger for that missing hour

Say: I've never had to but I would if the world

The world's a mother not acting like herself or maybe entirely like herself

All those years thinking as long as I can afford to I could buy the right selves who am I really spiting

& where to project the allegory today

not the cave but on the sidewalk

& today ahead like the groundhog in the wrong month reluctantly emerging

Seeing clearly our shadows on stilts let's just

Say we're getting there

Grounded

In Long Island now
tanagers land—
orange rust wings— no—

my bad, *leaves*—
landing, grounding,
mostly living, still playful.
More teenager than bird?

Do parents still ground their teenagers?
I don't hear them calling at dusk,
kids off cutting somewhere with friends,

but another of my friend's
down, or gone in, or made late,
in, I mean October, the
hole in the veil, barriers down—

and Louise visiting reassuringly:
she's in good voice, but
Katie? Not hide, not

hair. Poor Katie: a dark
ending, Casey said.
But maybe good
she's AWOL, like
there won't be a third?

Every day, people live
in spite of. Michelle's cast's a black
claw on Zoom. Another
rider hit her on the bridge.
How's your wrist,
I ask. It's my hand, she says,
not my wrist. Me too.
It's my hand that hurts
most often now. And don't,

Believer, claim these
palm-lines are trees—
they're leafless, but
roots? Sure, sure. Show

me next the school,
my curfew, the room
to climb out of. Send

me in soon, said no one,
or else I wasn't listening.