

Three Poems

Mekeel McBride

Late in the Day

Door closing slowly. Sunlight's
entire weight can't keep it open.
Hide and seek and sleep's looking
for you beneath the dusk-beveled sky.
A whole flock of birds lifts and leaves
as if you had exhaled them.
The empty space inside your chest
that nothing ever seems to fill, fills now
with the quiet they have left behind.

Center for Wildlife: Red-Tailed Hawk
for Lorisa Ricketts

It surprises me, how little she weighs,
the red tailed hawk in my arms.
I'm holding her as I've been taught,
one gloved hand around her legs,
just above the talons, the other hand
gathering her against my chest,
her back to my heart.

Lorisa, who's force-feeding her says,
quietly, "*She's old.*" I barely hear
what she says next, sadness
stealing sound, "*So beautiful ...*"
The hawk's here because someone
found her by the road, hit by a car,
starving, blind in one eye.

I'm hoping the beat of my heart's
the least bit comforting
but know the truth is she's sure
I want to eat her. As if it were possible
for imagination to reach the wildest part of her,
I keep sending her images of treetops
growing smaller as she rises,

the wild fields beneath her
rich with mice and moles.
And this is what I keep sending,
love letters made of living pictures,
even after I settle her back into the cage,
long after the next day's staff
opens the small door to find her gone.

Wrong in Daylight

Baba Yaga lifted me out of my strange, arranged world
into one I understood where the witch, who lived
in a house that spun on chicken legs, harnessed

her anger into abyss for anyone who crossed her
and no matter how hard the hapless passerby tried
not to, in the end, everyone crossed her.

And she was everywhere, even at school
where bells rang us from room to room, each class
a kind of terrarium and if the others were vibrant,

healthy plants then I was a moth, an error, wrong
in daylight among the real children. I practiced erasing
myself with clock hand and chalk dust, fierce dreaming

to the edge of things, porch, playground fence,
railroad tracks, the last place anyone would look.
Briar Rose, the thread I followed to the burnt star

of a bad fairy blackening the christening; the dwindling
of the hearth fire into a nest of ash; from the sting
of the golden spindle, a hundred years of blessed rest.