Poetry: After Months of Clouds, the Sun; First Bird

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After Months of Clouds, the Sun

Dry leaf breezes more wish than shhh. Sun shines somehow. You can walk into a space of wishing. Not sit at your desk head and despair. Not screen your eyes to blur. Get up. Walk into breeze and light.

The few stiff rags still hanging on branches all say locked too long inside rooms with and without a window but always the screen. The kind of looking out you were doing there was not looking but addiction to latest explosion and aftermath. See how the world holds together—trunks stay rooted, branches still etch a delicate corner of sky. The combined shadows of stop and street signs suggest weathervane. How to spin on weather’s hinge into joy.

Farah Marklevits’s writing has appeared in Literary Mama, The Carolina Quarterly, Fifth Wednesday Journal, and other magazines. In 2014 her poetry manuscript was a finalist for Milkweed Edition’s Lindquist and Vennum Prize and a semi-finalist for the Crab Orchard First Book Prize. She lives in Iowa with her family and commutes across the Mississippi River to teach first-year writing and creative writing at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois.

First Bird

I thought if I could only live
Till that first shout go by—
Not all Pianos in the Woods
Had power to mangle me—

—Emily Dickinson (348)


First bird luck plucked from the bloody crown of Christ, fire created or stolen. Phenology, a fairy tale that lures robin from shadows to glyphs of grass and buds over lawn.

The trouble is when, is should. Remind me how it happens, the sudden violence that gets a person feathers. Do the words of forest music simply frighten or do they mangle?

Give me this season of dread and urge to live in it.