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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.

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)

Mid-January in the Midwest. Worms twist
in workable loam. Cooled-ash feathers skip
a glowing coal from redbud branch. Its alien
eye gleams, flits, sends spring wheeling.

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.

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.