

# FRONT YARD: TACOMA

NATHAN BARLOW

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White picket fence, aging and covered  
in moss stands guard at the perimeter.  
Paint peels from slats of weatherworn wood  
like beads of sweat in the summer.  
The gate hangs  
from his hinges, a sentinel too long at his post.  
Steps of grey concrete, covered  
in decaying leaves, reach  
up from the street-side walk.  
Along either side terraced gardens of slumbering  
bushes share the leafy covering.  
At the top, a turn lined with waist  
high shrubs leafless in the winter wind.  
The corner is a patio of moss covered bricks,  
a privacy fence decorated in a green  
patina of moss separates ours from theirs.  
Eight more steps, concrete, aged, weathered,  
stones showing through the surface, polished and  
bright before the door.  
Outside the door, a tall green shrub, the only plant  
still holding its own oily leaves.  
Embedded within their ovoid, dark  
green are sparks of color.  
Pink petals fringe the yellow interior,  
a beautiful song of spring.  
Outside the fence across a bustling  
city street whitewashed concrete walls obscure  
the view. Against its smooth sides grass grows  
green and glistening with dew.  
Four crows, sleek, dark, and sinister, search  
through the trash left by a careless passerby.  
Their actions are us—  
We search for what makes us feel alive,  
Grey skies grow heavy with the threat  
of rain, but we don't care.  
Our home is here.

# MY FROZEN SUMMER

VIRGINIA SOILEAU

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I have learned to despise the very moment of waking.  
Not a second is wasted as I am reminded,  
with the barest flutter of an eyelid,  
how tentative my control has become.

The summer's breath could never unthaw my frozen skin.  
My nightmares are lined to dry in the sun warmed air—  
freshened each day to be draped over my shoulders  
like a winter shroud. Breezy and light, they settle.

Morning sunlight shines brightly through the open windows.  
Birds sing of girlhood dreams, ready to be caught in gentle hands,  
but my fingers have grown cold and weary,  
and my palms feel beaten and cracked like the old walls of my room.  
With the morning songbirds, my dreams have flown.

Little girl trapped, waking forever in this winter house of terrors—  
innocence beaten to a pulp of desolation  
while my will to stand, my will to walk and run, or play,  
has bent and submitted to a staggered crawl.  
My tears drift like molted feathers, lost in the sun.