



AUBADE

Winner of The LBJ's Inaugural Sparrow Prize for Poetry

Still waking, I find a still form,
a bird whose aim was to sweep
past our sleeping faces, to be
that glorious gust, or trumpet spurt

of dawn, and not this lidless eye
upturned below our window.
I kneel and slide my fingers
under fading warmth. A limp,

soft sparrow. Scaly talons
clutched as I carry it like an egg
beyond my yard and toss it
in brief revival back to the woods.

The knock did not wake my wife,
and neither do I, slipping into bed
to lie beside her with open eyes.
Light takes the hill, the trees,

our house into its definite grasp,
all the sparkling edges
revealing themselves, and all I hear
is breath after breath.

THE BLUE ELDERBERRY VERSION

I should have walked to where she stood
in the middle of a meadow, and said,
out of nowhere, out of right there,
how they sift the light to crisscross the heart.

While she took the measure of her new land,
hands on slender hips, frowning,
I should have told her about the grosbeaks
fluttering and clambering, gold streaks
among bunches of bluish berries.

I should have been a pair of hands tapping,
cupped and rapping, *Blue, you see, very old blue,*
Sambucus cerulea, oh what ya do to me.

She grabbed her husband, and pointed,
saying, *Those trees, they have to go,*
those heavy-headed sprawlers, squatters
of too many trunks wrapped in the wrong gray—

the air between our houses wiped clean
as a window. Daffodils. A green lawn.
Now my daughter is two and talking,
saying the names of things,

saying, as we stepped out last night
to the sounds of sprinklers spitting to life,
Monsters! and reaching for me
under a sky seeded with stars.