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Poems

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Kelly Morse

Snow Sowing

My mother-in-law on her morning jog down our gravel road
spooked a doe nibbling shoots then ran home like it was a rattler.
She's from Portland via Long Island and keeps asking about rats.
We try to bond over gardens, but lack a shared idea of cultivation –
up here she is far from lawns where hand-sized irises tongue the air
like dogs gulping, almost animal, her roses fleshy and in dishabille.
By the shady path among the Dutchman's beeches and blue-bead lily
an unknown: one tall brown stem studded with little round brown pods.
My mother-in-law pronounced *better pull or you'll never be rid of it*
but I let it alone. Goldenrod flares and sets, I shake earwigs out
from narrow wild iris cones to gather faceted buttons of jet,
but it is only now, as the new year's storms circle the frozen bay
the fibrous skeleton scatters its dark seeds onto the white below.
Drab rattle, you belong more than most, to need such snow to grow.

When I Say “Geoengineering”, You Say “What?”

Poems in this series record anxiety dreams about climate change that I have or others tell me about.

The dead poet tells us to fill the pool with lifejackets

then get in among their nylon rubbings.

We don't add sea otters even though they'd be useful.

There's no urchins in this pool, or maybe there were –

hard to tell with all the life jackets.

With the urchins gone or eaten the kelp begins to grow,

capturing carbon. What a glorious place, Earth:

small furry mammals eating creatures three-fourths spikes

as kelp seeds itself back into rocks.

At dawn my son wakes us with announcement

you're a daddy alien

you're a mommy alien

and I'm a meatball!

But really we're big apex predators. Studies show chimps eat

organic bananas peels and all, but of bananas grown with pesticides

they eat only the heart, throw the peels down.

Wild bananas almost completely pulpy seed,

their interior unrecognizable to me except by skin's shape.

Oh geoengineer who proposes the world is a banana
not yet optimized, with your talk of captures and fertilizations
until what remains are little brown specs in creamy flesh –

Another scientist says we need to re-wild half the earth
to save the whole of it.

I keep tossing life jackets into the pool,
it's quite full now with squeakings.

A Lyft Driver Dreams of Home

Laura dreams Manhattan is snowbound,
shut down, then crosses one street
and onward the temperature is normal,
an early October day. She stands
in the middle of the street on the island,
looking from blizzard to sunshine separated by concrete.
In Virginia in her red pickup truck she gestures out
toward our flooded streets – *It's in my mind.*

Last night I saw a picture of an Indigenous woman—

*you know, the Amazon fires are killing everything—
she was nursing her baby on one side and
some kind of little deer on the other –
they have way different animals down there, you know—
the indigenous people, the women, they're not like us, they know
nature is important, I kept staring at the picture
on my phone. Then I dreamed of snow.*

As she wipes her eyes Laura's locs dip down,
dyed mermaid-green at their ends.