

Hold

On the beach my dog chases the shadows
of seagulls flitting across dunes. Not the thing

but its dark projection, the closest approximation
her stubby legs can manage. The waves

are a balm for my raw edges, but I don't forget—
the water's depth is relentless. In its hostile pit,

so deep that red light cannot reach, creatures glow
blue-green. Its beauty is an unmapped terror I hold

in the only way I can, speaking its name in all the languages
known to me: la mer, el mar, il mare. The sea.

Blackberries

Our hands were deep
in the brambles, picking berries
from their plants, dropping them
into tin buckets. Scraped skin

from thorns, crimson seared
across knuckles: juice,
blood. We licked our fingers.
Some berries were sweet, some sour,

all dumped into the colander
for rinsing. Dough floured and rolled,
fruit sugared, our labor baking. Our age
a small number, we worked

with pleasure. Now, a plastic tube of pigment
in my hand—*Blackberry Crush*—tinting
my lips as if I'm just in from outside,
the pail's handle still warm from my palm.

At the Site of My Near-Miss with Death

From a few feet away, I saw
the impact. The sapling snapped
into splinters, its purple flowers

mashed to pulp. The driver,
pulled from his car, shocked
the air with a scream, and then sat

with his back to the broken tree.
After the fire engine, after
the ambulance, after the tow truck,

a gardener. He brought handfuls of green
to the wrecked planter bed, hoping
to coax life from debris. Daffodils

droop their yellow heads toward
the sun-scorched soil. Half-wilting
already and flimsy. They'll live
the season.

Ceres

Dwarf planet
of cold pastures, spin

with your ice volcanoes
and reservoirs of brine.

Your insides may yet be
hospitable to life. Goddess

of the field, of fertility,
what if a child never flowers

inside of me? I'll yield
no offspring and recede

from human memory.
Ceres, I bring you a grain

of guilt, hoping for permission.
You turn in the expanding infinite,

indifferent to the scale
of our remembering.

Disaster Season

Smoke drapes herself,
sullen, onto every surface.
I've been wearing her

haze like a shawl.
My lungs are scratchy
with ash. Shards

of burned bark
stick to my palm.
I wait for the close

of disaster season,
knowing the graphs
show a future

of ruin. The sun sets
unabashed orange-red.
In the dark, fingers

part my lips, place
a charred flake
onto my tongue.