

poem in a cold war hellscape

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KATIE PRINCE

poem in a cold war hellscape

an apocalypse of sorts: beachfront bunker, undead.
 the fishermen full of hope for a catch. soggy
 leather, trash, nuclear annihilation. we are all
 fishing these days, and reeling in an eyeball,
 maybe, a strip of neighbor's cheek. someone
 set the lions loose from the zoo. they prowl
 like kings, take down anyone with a spot of blood
 seeping through. the lookout tower has been bombed
 to bits. all fear unexploded. all quiet. all new.

DAMON McLAUGHLIN

Love Letters

with a line from Jack Gilbert

All this rainless month, fearing the terrible
 sound of apples at night, as they rain
 against this house, as the silence fades
 over the earth, a fighter in her fall—
 The first thunder feels far off, a distant
 babble of petals onto autumn fields.
 Then the orchards rise, hills crumble.
 It closes in with the white fury of a star.

Inside, small hopes draw closer
 to the notes of hard faith, quiet reason.
 The taut wires between us sharpen.
 I tongue your palm from your heart
 line to your life line. You ask the same
 of me, listening for the letters of your name.

PATRICIA CLARK

Birthday Dinner

Against the tapestry of a meal with friends,
 I spoke against my mother. And others spoke.

Three mothers who preferred brothers, singing praise,
 or saying, "Quiet, let your brother speak first."

On the table, a gift of white tulips in a bowl.
 Since then, I feel mother's anger at my words—

she's been gone thirteen years but she stays.
 Helen, Judy, and me—friends, we don't lie.

I was in kindergarten when the twins were born—
 from then on, the boys were always first.

When I spoke against my mother it was two
 days till my birthday—she used to say

I was born on a stormy night. We say a lot
 of stupid things in a lifetime, some we don't regret.

Against the tapestry of a meal—white tablecloths,
 bottles of wine—we three clinked glasses, eye to eye.