

Winning Poems in 2020 CFCP, Inc., Annual Contest

5. Nature, First Place

The Photograph

After a record rain, the first slice of sun
over the Bear Paw Mountains strikes a match
against a spruce by the cabin
An explosion of luminous gold encircles the tree
Alive in the swirl and low hum
Otherworldly in the prickles on my arm
Closer, the hum becomes a baby chain saw buzz
operated by thousands of dragonflies
Their wings flapping 24-carat fluorescence
One worker lights on a finger
on hands folded in reverence
A live ring with four-inch wingspan of shimmer
that casts me onto the fence of indecision
Straddled between desire to own
or to honor a dragonfly's right to life
Its stereoscopic eyes look into mine
In them I see the necklace of ranch surrounding us
How it fits in the jigsaw puzzle of prairie
The species that crawl, jump, fly
swim, gallop, eat and mate before returning
to the soil to become food for the earth's survival
I see in these eyes how my shape must also fit
And I lean away from the fall
toward a cage or embalming fluid
Instead into the cabin where a compromise waits
to capture the small miracle on my finger
To sanction the Jamaican belief
that a photo steals its subject's spirit

Ellaraine Lockie
Sunnyvale, CA

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