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Three Poems

by Amanda Hempel

Cigarettes at Night

You tossed cigarettes out the car window
each lit off another's end like holy inextinguishable
fire.

Orange explosions against so much black.

I smelled smoke and knew briefly how you taste—
like the universe beginning.

The Now of Jellyfish

Thousands of jellyfish glisten all down the beach
like cut glass, bitten in half and quarters and shards
by mouths that wait just under the gray-green pane.
My foot pauses in what Taoists call Now, the only
thing that exists,
no future step or past ones, just this hovering
waiting for a bravery as theoretical as those mouths
that do not exist on this side of the ocean.

Titmouse

A flash of gray-blue and a streak of auburn throat
among so much ordinary, and then everything was
wake:

the swaying branch, my hummingbird pulse.

I was frantic for possibilities.

Another flash of blue and I was sure.

But then the sunflower bobbed at my mistake.

Bluebirds don't eat seed.

And then I finally saw him, upside-down
hanging happy and oblivious from the face of the
flower

scattering husks into the garden, empty as hope.

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