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Poetry Submission: Four Poems

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TOY TRUCKS

I was not generally a violent child
nor am I a violent man.
This disclaimer aside, I recall
an ineffable joy that came
from repeatedly hurling against the pavement
a yellow Tonka Truck,
smashing it onto the surface of our driveway
with inexplicable passion.
The toy truck was made of a sturdy metal
but still I managed in this fashion
to inflict on it some brutal damage.
I always shied away from sport
but this was a competition I could appreciate.
When my father came upon me
(he had given me the truck as a present)
he angrily yanked me away
from this destructive entertainment
demanding, “Why would you do such a thing!”
It was a legitimate question for which I had no answer.
As instructed, I went to my room
where I quietly sat wondering whether I might
one day die in Vietnam.
‘YOU WERE
MY FIRST GRADE
TEACHER,
THE WOMAN
SAID SMILING’

Which child is this?

Looking at her face
I vaguely recall a mother,
a woman whose demeanor
her daughter has absorbed.
I quickly sift through
my thick mental catalogue
of one-time six-year-olds
compiled over the course
of forty years.

Ah yes. There you are.
A yellow dress.
USING XRAYS AS A MIRROR

Several times a year
he routinely reports to a barber.

Similarly, now he is advised
that it’s time to drape an apron
across his lungs – overdue, really –
and tidy up the mass of cells
that grows there like a cowlick.

By the look of things
soon his colon, too, will need a trim.
Its bangs keep getting in his eyes.
Never mind what his eyes are doing
down there.
COUNTING TO TEN

One small muscle’s spasmodic contractions:

end-of-times
terror,

a startled mind’s demonization of pain.

.

Bells ring in tiny throats —

two birds
on two branches
seen from this balcony
two floors up

— while silent droppings fall.

.

Three disembodied noses
from a newspaper photograph
decorate the origami hat.

.

Four squeaking clarinets
diminish
a composer’s legacy.

.

Counting the fat one,
there are five toes
on each foot.
Why do we not consider that one
an unopposable thumb?
“There are six of us and one of you,” the ham-faced bully sneered.

The targeted boy’s heart beat six times faster than normal.

“One of you’s in love with me!” he desperately cried, turning to flee.

Each of seven kittens sucks the nearest available nipple.

“Why is eight times eight called eight squared,” she shrieked,

“And eight times eight times eight called cubed?”

Nine knots on a weighted string can measure depth precisely, but only if one knows the secret of the distances between them.

Quietly counting,
five elderly couples
dance
to horrible music.