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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.