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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.