

**2017 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
Third Place: Mary Haapala**

Chameleon Color

Never mix grey from black
if you want your painting to breathe.
Nobody worth anything buys a tube of grey;
you can't bottle magic.

My eyes are blue grey
or green gray
depending on my shirt.

That's what he told me.

Connoted as dull.
it's the most alive
stealing hues from neighbors
laughing silver in light
winking mischievously between compliments
never black and white
so much more than a shadow.

We moved the painting from room to room
and it always seemed to match the wall:
Yellow
Green
Blue
Red

Grey is the last color your eye sees
but it holds your gaze
daring you to question its existence.

A chameleon never reveals her secret,
but rumors whisper she is simply gray.

Giant

My grandpa was a big man
or maybe I was just miniscule.
His laugh came from deep inside
where his lipless whisker kisses and
typewritten poem-letters bloomed.

He had more love than I realized.
It takes a lot of love to hide sadness
and he had lead aprons full of it.
 For she had stopped remembering him,
 try as she might
 and she left him to find him and herself
 and he left his heart with her.

But each time we came through his door,
he'd give away his warmth in wool sweater hugs
and under his double-bridged glasses he'd put on
a full smile just for us.
Because, as I said,
my grandfather was a big man.

Soft

Yes, I'm going to write about love.
It's something I feel,
so I'll write. No,
don't you dare deem me a marshmallow
undershaped, overfluffed,
under spell.
I am not a marshmallow.

Unless

it's one on fire
blue with heat
becoming black, but breathing.

Breathing.

Yes, I'm going to tell you about him
and deep brown eyes that hold heat in waves
and marks he leaves in my mind all day
placing pulsing embers in my veins. You say
love poems are overdone,
understood, overlooked.

But it burns.

Because, yes, I am a marshmallow
no longer stale from shelf sitting.
No, I am not what I was before:
under colored, over powdered,
undercooked.

Yes, I'll dance into the flames
I need to burn.
I need to breathe. But no,

you don't have to listen.

Be Careful

She was so preoccupied
watching her footing on the ice
and scrunching her shoulders so that her
pink scarf reached her pink ears,
that she failed to notice how the
new powder chased itself across the road
and how the falling flakes looked like stars,
lithe with lamplight,
against the ink of the sky

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It's hard to look at a poem
and not wonder if you regret
a word
a comma
or who you were back then.