

## Holding Shallow Breaths in the Heart Cage

*after Melissa Carroll*

After the storm that turned limbs to crystals, we found  
frozen the downy nestled  
in a pot of dead daisies, color preserved,  
eyes aimed to the oak in the distance.

Love is like this: a frozen state, a bird  
waiting for thaw.

We found other things, too. The bone  
of deer our dog dragged home  
as an offering. The nose of a vole poking  
from a hole in a stump. The loss of us.

Too long we freeze things  
to keep, to hold, in hope that some day  
the thaw will come.

But this is what moments do—

they wing by, a blur of time and color  
that fades like an old film.

We could not take flight, but stayed  
still through the silent storm.

Hurt is like this: a pointed shard in the ribs,  
memory unshakable.

The melt will come—it always  
does—and underneath the detritus of us,  
a green that browns. But time, we hope,  
will stitch whatever gap and give

again the possibility of bloom.