Really Barely There

Sometimes love misses the mark, like a meat cleaver

hurled at an intruder

that lands smack

dab in the wall, and sticks there. Twenty years after I put my arm

through a window at the Lion's Club picnic,

I can still see, though myopically,

the red scar, and can still feel it at night,

pumping and buzzing like an extra heart,

a wren's organ, an unnatural part

of something sewn to my body. It doesn't hurt; it's really barely

there, like the kind of love that hurls

past the loved one's head without rustling a hair-did I say this hair

was dark?--a dark hair.

Still, I want to pull my sleeves

down to my wrists and walk through an oak door humming,

because if you're not sick there's no cure.

So it's not a virus that makes that particular darkness

disturb me, even now, though we only brushed

accidentally, and rode in crowded cars a few times knee to knee,

and once a hell

of a long time ago hiked 5,000 feet to a ridge

where it was so cold the sun felt dead, and the only heat worth seeking

was between our toes,

inside of our mouths, and under our skin,

but we did not touch.

Can lack of contact leave a scar? To regret

would be excessive, so I feel something smaller, a wren's claw

clawing me lightly, the way dark hair might brush my cheek

in the split second just before sleep.

Third Coast

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