

## Charlie Brice

### Surprise

When you go to hug someone  
and they disappear—  
you stand there like a human lobster  
arms outstretched, hands  
searching for a back.

This happens when I try to tell  
Paula, my girlfriend,  
what it was like to pound  
on my dad's chest,  
look at his purple jowls.

She changes the subject.  
I try to tell her about  
his expression of surprise,  
his chest still and unmoving.  
She changes the subject again.

I'm fourteen and, like Wile E. Coyote,  
suspended in midair  
after running off a cliff  
I didn't know was there.

**Charlie Brice** is the author of *Flashcuts Out of Chaos* (2016), *Mnemosyne's Hand* (2018), and *An Accident of Blood* (2019), all from WordTech Editions. His poetry has been nominated for the Best of Net anthology and twice for a Pushcart Prize and has appeared in *The Atlanta Review*, *The Main Street Rag*, *Chiron Review*, *Poetry Super Highway*, *SLAB*, *The Paterson Literary Review*, *Muddy River Poetry Review* and elsewhere.