



## **Jackleen Holton Hookway – 5 poems**

### *Special Feature*

#### **Bullseye**

The day we brought him home,  
our separate boxes still  
unpacked, their contents  
yet to intermingle,

he darted out to the balcony,  
this white tabby  
with orange tie-dye rings  
on his back and belly.

We rushed to the ledge  
where our new apartment opened  
to sky. We reached  
for him. He jumped.

His long body cartwheeled  
end-over-end, clawing the air.

Over the months he'd brave  
the three-story freefall  
any chance he got, always  
righting himself just  
before he touched down.

But as we neared  
the one-year mark,  
our belongings coupled  
on common shelves,

he stopped raking his paws  
against the screen door, meowing  
to be let out into the heavens.

When the vet said Leukemia,  
we coughed up the nine hundred  
dollars for radiation  
and fifty a week for meds.

After the last round of chemo,  
we were hopeful. We left  
the sliding-glass door open.

But that night, he stretched out  
on the kitchen floor and died.

This month, the lease is up.  
Our separate boxes again  
line the walls as we move  
soundlessly between

the emptying rooms, blinds  
squinted tightly against  
the white sky.

## **The Church I Go To**

Most evenings I walk to the rim  
of this little canyon where the silhouette  
of a black branch against  
the striations of sky, bay and ocean serves  
as a *drishti* to still my mind between  
breaths. A screech. I look up,  
glimpse the white underside  
of a barn owl in flight.  
A few other seekers

wander the grounds outside this chapel,  
some alone, some pulled  
along by the noses of dogs,  
like this woman in gray sweats, limbs  
heavy, head down as the Rottweiler  
leads her along the rock-lined path.

I know a guy who says *no more poems*  
*about nature. The birds and trees*  
*don't need anymore words.*

He's right, of course. This box-elder,  
lit by the last stroke of sun, coins  
its own money, tithes

its fallen leaves to the earth.

And that shrieking owl,  
now ensconced in its branches

won't be made more glorious  
by these few lines, scribbled  
across a darkening page.

## **The High Dive**

My husband let me sleep in this morning. He fed the baby and made me tea when I got up. There was a vase of sunflowers and a birthday card on the coffee table. When I opened the sliding glass door, I saw the frost on the golf course. I can't remember the last time I saw grass frosted over. My mother used to call me every year on this day, remind me that she had to scrape the ice off the windshield before she drove herself to the hospital. She said *You were born on the coldest day of the year*. In the hot tub, I promised my husband I'd get my office organized. He vowed to quit smoking again in the new year. After a walk by the bay, we had lunch at the High Dive, a beer joint where, in my old life, I had too many bad dates, where once a friend I'd known for fifteen years uttered a sentence that felt like cold wind blowing through a rotten tooth. But the High Dive was on the way home, so we stopped and ordered sandwiches. The baby was whiny and the husband was grumpy because the food was taking so long. Everyone in the bar was younger than us by ten years at least, and probably wondering what we were doing there

with a crying baby. But then he lifted her from the high chair and held her against his chest, this child who came to us in my forty-fourth year. The light was streaming through the window behind us, dust motes lit up like little stars. I pulled out my phone and took a picture, and in another moment she erupted again. When the food finally arrived, we appeased her with French fries, but she was tired, so we ate fast, took half of our lunch to go, all the young drinkers gazing into the golden pints in front of them, probably happy we were going, probably praising their good fortune that they were not us.

## **Elegy For Amy Fullerton**

I'll start with a confession:

I hated you. In your zip-around  
jeans and knee-high moccasins,

your Def Leppard t-shirt cut  
into a fringed halter top. Hated  
the way you loitered in the parking lot

of the defunct Fed Mart, waiting  
for the dropouts with cars.  
It was rumored that you could suck

a long white cigarette down  
to the filter in one drag. I admit it:  
I gossiped about you, recited

the verses of insulting limericks  
in hallways and bathrooms. I knew  
there were those above me, the preppy girls

and the wrestlerettes. I curled my hair under,  
wore it over my face. You flipped yours up  
and feathered it back like you didn't give a shit.

How was I to know that we could have shared  
the same pink childhood, the bedroom  
with its crowd of stuffed animals

and dolls whose eyes never moved when  
the light from the door fell over the white  
bedspread, and the man let himself in?

I wonder what might have been  
different if I had understood that we were  
the same. May you rest in peace, Amy Fullerton,

who wrote in my yearbook, with hearts  
and smiley faces, *I wish I'd gotten to know you better.*  
*Keep in touch, and have a great summer!*

## Spring 1969

The night air still carried traces  
of winter. The social at the junior college  
gave way to a smaller gathering  
behind the science building. They leaned  
together in the quiet parking lot,  
his worn varsity jacket draped  
over her shoulders. Once inside  
his father's red '57 Bel Air, he pulled  
her to him, pried open her mouth  
with his tongue. She went down  
easy on the cool vinyl seat. On the radio,  
Diana Ross and the Supremes belted  
out a song neither of them would recall  
come December of that long year,  
after the layoffs at Lockheed Aircraft,  
the silent drive to Las Vegas.  
Nor could they have imagined  
sitting in the hospital on the coldest  
day of the year, a packed suitcase at her feet  
as the heavy nurse with the blonde beehive  
sprang into the room, cradling  
a blanket-wrapped bundle nestled  
inside a large Christmas stocking  
which she held out to them like a present.

**Jackleen Holton Hookway's** poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in journals including *Atlanta Review*, *Bayou*, *Kestrel*, *North American Review*, *Rattle*, *Sanskrit*, *Talking River*, and the anthologies *The Giant Book of Poetry* and *Steve Kowit: This Unspeakably Marvelous Life*. In 2014, *Bellingham Review* awarded her the 49th Parallel Poetry Prize. She lives in San Diego and works as an astrologer/life coach and a poet-teacher with California Poets in the Schools.