

three poems

by **Travis Wright**

Copperhead Venom

can treat cancers. My favorite morning
I watch a field hawfinch lift off the heathland
without cancer, glazed in recusant gestures
of light, and a dead-built tract of bright,
fractal gorse greets it—the belt of broom thicket
under it, its kits of delicate, sunlit tints,
and dyes, yellowed in exact silence. When the cancers
are questioned, and the cancers answer
us, finally, they know nothing of use. The hawfinch
has flown to his other world, and out of
heath the river's hypnotic progress flows
away from us. I know your tears, dripped out
in a failed meter, all your regret, proofed
with them in a cask of copperhead venom:
all the years left we have to live.

An Oxford Fox

Always alone the Oxford fox swivels street
to street at night, appearing then disappearing
beneath flecked rows of light. There are pups
but not here: in some den he buried for them
they bark like birds and rummage bins, too young
to raid the night roads with him. It lay
like debris on the concrete when I found it,
a feathered aftermath, moonstruck by shades
of beige, and bronzed plume, what eyes
were left prepared for prayer, and brown wings
peeled back from flight. It was a blunt sight
when I found it, bared to bone like grit, the white
tail stripe died red, which I notice propped up
on the curb, where he unburied it: both
of us braving our alien entanglement.

Moonglade on Armadillo

Outbreak, blackout, surname. It was shot up
the shell-shocked carcass inside that slat

cloud of flower mound, cratered by hole drops
along the lawn. Dad had sat dark to dark

a row of nights with a shotgun
he bought at the pawnshop, on lookout

from the brow of a hill, his lawsuit
in hand, ready to repel the pocket raider.

The first shot I heard split apart its shape
into symptoms of something else:

the bone plates, the volvation slate
beat thin by inches of moonglade, its viscera

spit out on the lawn like a lithograph,
chrismated in light. No way to save it

the second shot around, any odd
it had waxed gibbous again, as I laid

back in the black of my bed, wondering
if it had wanted too much from the world.