

## Three Poems

### **Audrey Tumberg**

*Winner, Thomas McGrath Award for Poetry*

#### **Baby, I'm on Fire!**

I'm catching fast  
I'm catching quick  
Burning an imprint into the ground underneath me so cleanly  
Witnesses' eyes whisper  
"Impressive, that!"

Months ago, I dug my knees down  
Down into the soil  
Months ago, I tilted my lips up  
Up towards the sky  
And asked for something that would shake the frost clean off

Answered prayers are extreme in nature  
Aren't you old enough now to know better?

The grace of being answered is accompanied  
By a burning loop of a dense fever

Blistering hotness underneath my temples  
Flushed heat behind my eyes

White-hot palms turned over  
Shallow lines face up  
Towards the height of the pale pines  
What does it say when one doesn't put up a fight?

Pleas spoken aloud to the high sun  
Empty begs for mercy, mercy, mercy  
Let them not be heard

Eyelids hot  
The thinness nearly melded  
Small crack of light  
Familiar shadow in the distance

You, even when my eyes are shut for me  
There, kicking up embers with an upturned smile  
I'm a mirror, watch me move  
the corners of my mouth in the same way

Just like that?  
Just like that

Baby, I'm on fire,  
just come burn the rest of me already!  
Baby, come on,  
don't waste no time!

**Nana**

Landline  
Bike ride  
5<sup>th</sup> gear  
“Cut across that lawn there”

Green grass  
Mighty big hill  
Across the way  
Larger than life

Slight shoulders  
Gently settling  
Into curved dirt

Silver hair  
Blonde curls  
Hazel eyes  
Two pairs  
Matching set

Set lines around a tan face  
Sunkissed many times  
Smooth ivory skin  
Sunburnt just once

Let us lie in the same grass  
Let our pressure make that wild turning Earth be still  
Let us point out the same cloud  
With our matching pairs

“That one—  
There.”

## Gentle Tasks

Tracing a thin gold chain down  
To the point of a cross sitting there  
At the crest of your chest

Remember how  
That warm toned metal looked  
Set flush on pale skin

Measuring the small depths  
On each side of your spine  
With careful fingertips  
Mindful pressure

Remember how many centimeters it took  
To reach the smooth soft edge  
Of that shallow depth

Outlining your knuckles  
Up and over and over and up

Remember how  
Those peaks and valleys felt alive  
As they rose and as they fell

Gentle tasks  
Held in the muscle memory  
Of my body  
My skin

Let me remember how it all felt  
Let me hold onto it  
Let me memorize it by heart

I've placed it there

For safe keeping  
Just in case we're onto something

**Audrey Tumberg** is a senior at UND majoring in English and obtaining a certificate in writing, editing, and publishing. Audrey hopes to enter the editing field post-graduation with a direction in developmental editing. In her spare time, Audrey can be found downtown writing new ideas for her creative work, reading, or sketching.