

KATE GASKIN

---

## Poem in Which You Leave

Springtime, the azaleas  
in pink fire, the baby there

beside the rocking chair  
on my parents' front porch.

And you are where?  
Here is a monotony

of baby gear, the swing  
that clicks him side to side,

a small origami  
of laundry, loose bottles,

frozen rings for his teeth,  
one breast that gives

and the other that gives  
up its milk in grief.

\*

He is rolling over  
front to back, back to front

as you crouch  
in the desert and cradle

your phone. A miracle  
to see it at all

from so many miles, the planes  
that drone, the wind

that scabs the brush, your face,  
the crust of salt and dust

you wear like skin.  
Again, you say. Again.

\*

And tease me, my boots,  
my kin, the wind

in my hair down Elkahatchee  
Creek, the shed skin

of ribbon snakes the summer when  
we chased Hale-Bopp

down our neighborhood streets.  
I did not want to come home

to this, you gone, the ghost  
of my legs whitening in the lake,

you kissing me,  
you kissing me and then—

\*

When you left  
I dug our wretchedness

up like a bulb and moved it  
back home while you flew

off to war. Now I nurse  
from my right side

as the catalpa trees  
flush white

and the yard weeds over  
in bright green.

---

**KATE GASKIN** is the author of *Forever War* (YesYes Books 2020), which won the Pamet River Prize. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Guernica*, *Pleiades*, *The Southern Review*, and *Blackbird* among others. She is a recipient of a Tennessee Williams Scholarship in poetry to the Sewanee Writers' Conference, as well as the winner of *The Pinch*'s 2017 Literary Award in Poetry. She lives in Omaha, Nebraska.