



Photo credit: Alessandra Capodacqua

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this year: our tempers, the climate, the fear
my student wears who wants to go home
to Afghanistan, but can't. There's the pang of pain
in my chest when I try to breathe. Call it the heart
choking, or the invisible weight of uncertainty.
But let's end the night with this: there are children
playing baseball and though the drone of NPR hosts

discussing drones chatter in the background

like white noise, I barely hear it. I watch one child
hit a double, watch dirt rise as he slides,
watch the simplicity of being close to safe
as the thwack of a ball suction to leather.

What the Bones Say

What we touch we don't feel.
Our language, a series of single notes, crack
a different rhythm each time.
Never the same song twice. Never
a bone with a twin voice. Believer
of muscle and strength, we may not live
like organs pulsing, but we structure
your shadow, break without bend.
When no one carries
your history, we will.

America, 2017

We ache. We argue against the TV and our thoughts
flatten against the screen. We break a dish
in the sink and bleed cleaning it up. We cry
and crawl through crud. We drag and devour our fate

like a feast. We eat leftovers for breakfast,
evaluate life in therapy. We fumble joy

mid-protest, mid-fear. We gamble morals
for morsels. We grasp the grit. We halt,

then humbly ignite. We incite. We jump rope
and recall childhood songs. We jam

our dreams, knit our knots, but still knock
on a neighbor's door. We live, long, and mourn.

We mumble our speech. We negate. We negotiate
the curve on our bikes. We organize and open

yesterday's mail. We pray, and plummet
in pain. We quiz ourselves until we quit. We read,

then rumble our voices louder than Trump's tweets.
We stumble and the sun still sets, still rises. We stretch

and topple the takeaway, then unravel.
We uproot what we didn't know was rooted.

We vote and vent with friends. We wait.
We would do more, but how? We x-ray bodies

to find the break's location and mold a cast.
We yell and yearn and zip children's coats

to keep out the cold. We zoom through
an alphabetical list without noticing

our breath that holds us here
in this chair, without noticing

how small we are
and how small we aren't.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Nicole Robinson

Nicole Robinson's recent poems have appeared in *Artful Dodge*, *Great River Review*, *Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in Ohio and is a writer-in-residence at Akron Children's Hospital where she leads creative writing workshops for patients, families, and staff.