

5.

Rewind/ Do Over

Let something reverse, move back in time or space within your poem.

Do Over

Like a cripple at a summer tent revival,
my sister rose from the ICU bed,
flicked off the ventilator,
removed IVs and tubes.
Her chest expanded with each breath.
Intracranial pressure decreased,
brain no longer bruised melon.
Blood pressure stabilized.
Pupils responded to light.
Medevac helicopter blades reversed
direction, returned her to the road
that ran parallel to white water.
She eased back into her car, listened
to Paul Simon's *Graceland* spill
from the radio until the Mustang
rounded the blind curve,
passed her Subaru.
She then off-loaded her kayak,
slid into the rapids.

Nina Bennett
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Rewind

Undo a kiss
move backwards
disentangle yourself

pause stand up
turn left and walk
south towards the door

say good-night
to the evening sun

lace up your ice skates

move one foot
glide into night as if
your life depended

on it until you waltz
until you hug yourself
until you find where

you first were born
in the wrinkled arms
of your father's embrace

Caroline Johnson
from *The Caregiver*.

Improvement

The optometrist says my eyes
are getting better each year.
Soon he'll have to lower my prescription.
What's next? The light step I had at six?
All the gray hairs back to brown?
Skin taut as a drum?

My improved eyes and I
walked around town and celebrated.

We took the letters
of the marquee, the individual leaves
filling out the branches of the sycamore,
an early moon.

So much goes downhill: our joints
wearing out with every mile,
the delicate folds of the eardrum
exhausted from years of listening.

I'm grateful for small victories.

The way the heart still beats time

in the cathedral of the ribs.

And the mind, watching its parade of thoughts
enter and leave, begins to see them
for what they are: jugglers, fire swallowers, acrobats
tossing their batons in the air.

Danusha Laméris
from *Bonfire Opera*

Time Is On Fire

I meet a physicist at the party and immediately
ask him if it's true that time doesn't exist, time
bring important to me. Even now, I'm older,
time's crypt and wish curl around me like a ghost wind.
He doesn't answer, so maybe I don't exist. One day:
nothing. Another: mushroom or mildew, or some
inching sprout, or some leaf gone black and dead.
Time does that. The arrow we ride into the now,
then turn into the future, does not pull out of the skin
backward. Or does it? the past is happening.
Pampas grass slicing the thumb before the dozer
came and cut the grass out like a cancer, my old cat
Smoke leaving dead birds on the garden posts,
the first man, the first woman, the madrone's rust-
colored berries of fall, each second is in me. The arrow
we ride like a horse, mute and fast, retraces and races,
so that right now even as my valley burns, it rewinds
too, each black ash rubble pile pulls itself back
into a dear home, a living cat leaps into the understory,
and in the soft yellow hills the first flame goes out.

Ada Limón
in *The Carrying*