

Featured Poems of Jackie Huss Hallerberg
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www.jackiehuss.com

1. With Our Own Hands

(after reading Kazim Ali's poem "Drone")

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Maybe we see everything from a distance now.
Like the drones we build,
We view life from twenty thousand feet,
Separate ourselves from the pain —
Autonomous capability.

Do we eventually become what we make?
If we make poems, do we become the words
Or the single letters from which they're formed,
Or the thought just before our pencils land?
Be careful what you make.

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Written Here

2. Dream Farm Road

Inverness, California

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We are understudies in this bed -
our performance, a rehearsal.
Just look out the window
where acacias burn yellow,
and hills slope down into green
then rise like breasts or thighs -
nipples pointed skyward,
length of loins laid beside.

We could learn from these
ancient hills, this landscape pair -
a god and goddess so confident
and slow, knowing their opening
will come, not clawing after it
or groping under blue moon light
for just the right spot.

We stop, wait for their lead,
wait while the landscape deities roll on,
amused by our earlier efforts.
All night I dream of them, coupling, cresting
mounting each ridge until morning
when I awaken to see them satisfied and still.
Maybe it is our turn now, and I tumble
up against you, my opening line:

*Say yes to everything,
they whispered in my dream.*
Tule elk graze, California poppies
burst through wetness, wild
mustard and iris bloom early this year.
It is spring, I tell you.
We have practiced enough.

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Getting the News

3. How to Stop the Old Conversation

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Go out on a winter's day
and take the winding boardwalk that snugs up against
white sands and the slender grasses of Asilomar beach.

See the power of the Pacific surf, waves breaking,
then building, almost too close to shore today,
so even the wooden planks solidly placed seem to sway as you walk.

Smell your growing weariness —

a sudden rainfall and you've left the umbrella in the car,
a slight glance at the man and his dog passing and your toe catches a rock,
a request to snap a picture and your memory goes back fifteen years,
then twenty, then thirty, until you land on what seemed like solid ground,

only to find all the promises broken now.

Set the timer for thirty minutes to walk out, then return, in consideration
for the long drive home and the coming storm and your mind, which
sometimes forgets where the car is parked and where you started.

Return to the lodge, search for dry socks and the water bottle,
queue the book-on-tape, watch bridesmaids in orange hurry in from the rain,
then wonder why a young couple rushing past has missed the wedding.

Invite your own particular aloneness to sit in the seat beside you,
its breath alive with heartbreak and fury and sweet regret,
and as you drive away let the soft words of a new conversation

slide in through the open window —

just listen.

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Where Animals Move Like Planets