

SEASONAL LAYOFF

His watch in hock,
he winds the clock.
His undershirt's hole
in a cameo role,

He "dresses down"
(they'd say in town)

and, leaving the powers
of punctual hours

to reign in the flat,
it's springtime, he walks out to that.

—DAVID AIVAZ

EXCUSES

Facing his final days of life,
A father often wishes
He'd spent more hours with kids and wife
Not washed more dinner dishes.

A dying mother's last regrets?
She should have found more time
To play with family and pets
Not scrubbed more bathtub slime.

And so, in preparation for
A happier demise,
We think it's best if we ignore
The urge to sanitize.

—MELISSA BALMAIN

MY FIRST GAME AS A RUNNING BACK

In uniform, I'm feeling dread.
Our son's not quite a man, he'd said.

I'd overheard him years ago:
Is this a phase that he'll outgrow?

He never wants to run and play.
Mom said, He studies every day.

On the first play, my jock too tight,
I shift position to the right.

He's far too conscious of his clothes.
Good god. He cooks, and sometimes sews.

The play's a pass. My feet are light
and thread an opened seam, take flight.

You even let him study dance.
You want our boy to be a nance?

Dogged by defenders, I pirouette
and snag the ball. But laid out flat,

I crack two ribs. She's full of joy
when Mom shouts out, Now that's my boy!

I wonder why they think this grand,
and wish that I played in the band.

Dad toasts me with a Blatz beer can
before he bellows, You dah man!

—RALPH LA ROSA

POETIC ENDS

1
Hart Crane
Flushed himself down the drain
To assuage his fear
That The Bridge didn't cohere.

2
Charlotte Mew
In her whisky threw
Lysol, effecting
Her complete disinfecting.

3
Weldon Kees
Stepped out on the breeze,
His work unrequited.
Still, he keeps being sighted.

4
Edgar A. Poe
Ought to have said "Oh-oh"
When plied with jiggers
By election riggers.

5
Sylvia Plath
Wasn't strong on math,
But she knew how to set
A mean gas jet.
48

6
Ambrose Bierce
Penned satires fierce.
He thought it mannish
Simply to vanish.

—X. J. KENNEDY

VALEDICTORY

Thank you, friends, for this splendid pocket watch,
Who knew that real silver was so bright?
And better still the fancy flask of scotch
My wife and I will toast you well tonight!
I might have known that handsome captain's chair
Was waiting for me out there in the hall.
And this old photo from when I had hair
Will find a place of honor on my wall!
You all have meant so much to me, each day,
Each minute, of these thirty-seven years.
And, heavens, all these gifts....What can I say?
Just "Thank you" any more and I'd risk tears.
I fear it's all too much for an old man;
I would have settled for a pension plan.

—DAN SKWIRE

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