

## Eleven Poems by Cameron Morse

### In Its Name

The storm door floats  
above its latch, catching  
the breeze: a breath  
and the door lifts on its

hinges, a breath and it  
eases back to kiss itself  
to death in the storm  
that is in its name,

that is its namesake,  
its for the sake of  
which I am. I dream  
of storms & of

doors. I dream and storms  
creak open, a flood gate:  
doors landing in yards  
and parking lots.

I get lost in a storm of storm  
doors. Take a breath  
and my chest lifts. Ease back  
and I resuscitate.

## Today Is the Driveway

I am driven again  
through tree rings, rungs  
of the ancestral ladder  
climbing upward into leafy  
arms that borrow green  
from the daystar. Today  
I ride along in my unraveling  
wicker chair, nursing  
my stung ankle. There must be  
a new way to say this, an escape  
from the labyrinth of language.  
The garage door yawns. I spin  
my spidery yarns. Today  
is a getaway car that has gotten  
away from me. There must be  
another way to pilot this  
pirate ship, to make  
bank maybe with Christ  
in the crow's nest, a rockstar tucked  
amid a whorl of hatchlings,  
a funereal wreath. Today's ledger  
is a jungle gym of telephone  
wires, wired and ready. The minotaur  
on every street corner breathes  
flames, the exhaust fumes  
of each burning tree.

## Toward and Away From

The house gestures  
toward heaven. Its gable  
end is an arrow:  
*Look up!* I point my fingers  
away from myself.  
The house noses upward,  
a stealth bomber. *Lift-off!*  
I bury my nose, not  
knowing where my end is,  
my treasure. Unsure  
where I planted the acorn,  
I scrabble. Am I kidding  
with this escape route  
like buying toilet paper  
for the apocalypse? Am I a kid  
again in a funhouse mirror  
warped, weaponized? In a fallout shelter  
sheltered? My language gauges  
its own temperature,  
not mine. The house swallows  
another chemo capsule  
before bed, another tiny chance,  
a time capsule transporting me back  
to the night of my first seizure.

## Ugly Mug

My favorite mug  
of my mother's does  
a perched bird  
with just one blue  
brushstroke. "Monster,"  
my younger sister  
calls it, "ugly." Dis-  
proportionate but  
the handle fits  
my hand: a snug mug.

Every time I open  
the cabinet, it's there,  
waiting for me,  
the blurred bird  
almost boxy  
upon its slender branch.  
There are so few  
things that can be  
accomplished with just  
one gesture: One  
fluid motion

passes through me.  
There are no moving parts.  
The blue bird is  
riveted. I, on the other hand,  
swim among leaf  
shadows and wasps  
casing the cedar shingles  
for new nests. A leaf lands  
in my coffee. I fish  
it out and take a drink.

## A Candle, Burning

Stubborn as a stomach  
I ask again, though  
what I stand to gain from

the alms bowl but  
an empty feeling bedevils me.

Stubborn, or stillborn,  
I bed down in the driveway,  
my bed as restless,

or restive, as asphalt, rubber.  
Rest is morbid, anyway.  
Why waste time

with tread marks  
when you could burn tread,  
candle-bearer? There is an uplift

in this draft, if you catch  
my drift, drifter: You will catch

on fire and flame. If not,  
be content with this  
spot, this stain, these ants.

## A Crooked Stream

The white doorframe  
flows downward, framing  
another door, however  
jagged, in the dark floor planks.

I live in a rivery room,  
not the moor you called me from  
in French. If I reach  
a hand for the knob, another hand  
would grab me by the leg  
arising from the river I live on.

This would is wooden. Its  
flow isn't half as free as I am,  
my hand. Is it jagged as the knob  
it holds? As wavy, wavering?  
Knifelike, I reach out my hand.  
A knife is another kind of doorway.

## Aubade

Daylight unleashes the dogs of water.  
Our dreams glob together  
in the dark and cling to the cold rail.  
Daylight makes it hard to recall  
the names we are called by  
when it's time to come in for dinner.  
It silvers the distance, lifting word  
from sentence, sentence from paragraph,  
stem from stem, into steam, breathless  
excitement, etymology. Blue jays  
paraglide from apple tree to apple tree.  
Theirs is the orchard of my children.  
Daylight ghosts the distance,  
whitening the dead end of the street.

## Bedtime Procedure

Theodore, age four,  
wants to cut my neck  
with scissors

and snip out the tumor  
in my brain.  
I agree to the procedure.

My neck is as good a door-  
way as any. Anyway,  
I know the risks. My son

is a cutthroat surgeon.  
His scissors soar. "Proceed,"  
I say, unbuttoning

my collar. There is a flap  
of silver wings. My  
trachea creaks. Train tracks

litter the operating room,  
deposits of picture  
books and wooden blocks.

Mommy trips over a tow truck.  
Toe-stubbed, she arrives  
at last to relieve me.



## Cops and Robbers

My head is a pinball machine  
of glitzy sensations

now that October's here  
with its cold hands

and the tumor's up to no good,  
again, a ornery ghost

gumming up the circuitry  
with its entrails. At breakfast,

I trail behind in conversation.  
I'm somewhere back there

with a stinger in my cerebrum  
screaming please be quick,

don't linger, don't grow.  
If there is growth, don't let

me feel it just yet, the brain cramp  
ransack search and seizure.

The silver ball still floats.  
The kite comes unchained,

a child again in the chase,  
the make-believe.

## Crystal

Today's gray October  
rain copy  
cats or edits  
balusters on the watery  
boards. A choir  
of kitchen clocks digitize time  
out of synch, out of  
tune, haphazard and tone-  
deaf. Green sticks  
spell doom in liquid  
crystal, the name of my  
pharmacist. Her balusters are  
pill bottles, her October the truth  
of a toothache. The oven  
lags behind the microwave. The coffee  
maker sprints ahead.  
The mirror is a mirage. You will  
not find yourself  
on any surface. Vampiric,  
you feed off your pharmacist,  
gray October corpse  
flower, floundering in the boards  
of a sinking houseboat,  
bloated, attuned to cathedral, carnival.

## Gospel Ready

The burning bush is  
just a boarding pass.  
I would board the red  
hedge. I'd remove  
my sandals and pass  
through security.  
It's a relief to buckle  
a seatbelt, update  
an old password, as if  
outsmarting yourself.  
Downhill, my fall color  
is red. Bedeviled, I  
believe in the gospel  
of leaps and bounds.  
Each slow leaf follows  
the long flight path  
out of itself, breadcrumbs  
in the grass. Each Icarus  
is dressed in his father's  
feathers, his fears. I choose  
my father's engineering  
brain. I put on his attention  
to detail. God is burning  
the world today: *Blastoff!*  
Safe to say: I'm outta here.