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Enmeshed

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Enmeshed

Late morning, mid-March,
waiting for your mother
to come out, you thrum
the windows down,
click the engine off,
and inhale spice
of evergreen needles twined
with fertile soil released
by rise of daffodil blades
and squirm of earthworms.

A wasp dips under
the eaves to build
a papery nest.
Its buzz joins
the creaks of your car
coming to rest
in air dense with pollen,
knotted leaves,
and blooms
keen to uncurl.

Inside Mom smokes her last
for hours to come,
though she vowed to quit
after Dad's death.
She will enter the car
rife with remains
in her clothes, hair,
skin--the stink
of what killed
your husband too.

But you will greet her,
touch her arm,
look into her eyes, gage
how she's faring--
the way family
and friends queried you
after each loss.
But even you can't fathom
living alone at eighty
after a near sixty year union.

You close your eyes
to soak in layers
of birdsong:
single notes, phrases,
entire arias
of varied tempo and timbre;
recalling Dad,
his birdfeeders,
and wars waged
with squirrels.

At scuffle of leather
soles on concrete,
your eyes rise
to see her shuffle
forward, swathed
in pastels, the monarch
pin you gave her
piercing a white
lace sweater draped
over sloped shoulders.

You turn the key, hum
the windows closed
to keep her warm,
with locks in place;
watch her burrow
her way past cracks
and errant mulch.
You hold the heady essence
of hyacinth petal-pods
and unwind.

Karen George, author of *Into the Heartland* (Finishing Line Press, 2011), has been awarded grants from The Kentucky Foundation for Women and Kentucky Arts Council. Her work has appeared in *Memoir, Still, Single Hound, Thumbnail, Vestal Review, and Barcelona Review*. She holds an MFA in Writing from Spalding University.