

DEBRA BRUCE

Himself Again

Because he left but didn't go,
you'll never prove there was a loss.
His presence pressured you to hope.
Your grief was an abandonment.

Trauma came back, forcing him
into a room you'd never seen.
You gave your name at guarded doors
to sit with someone who wasn't there.

Still, at the news of his release
the air got bright inside your head
and sent you speeding down August roads,
overcome by goldenrod.

You put the chairs back on the deck
and made your mind up to rejoice
with whoever he was, his safe return.
Summer wasn't over yet,

as witnessed by cicadas, that year's
miniscule administrators
of death unmarked by document,
or anyone's acknowledgement.