

NYSFP

NEW YORK STATE OF POETRY



2026 Anthology

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Third Apartment

After "The Layers" by Stanley Kunitz

I have walked the spaces I learned to keep quiet.
Not hallways exactly
more like the gap between lockers
the breath you hold when someone knows your name
and you aren't sure if it is welcome
or a weight you cannot lift.

Some rooms smelled of burnt coffee
and disinfectant dragged across linoleum.
Radiators coughed metal into the walls
rain darkened my sleeves before I noticed my hands were wet
fingers slick against chipped paint
a reminder I was still here, still fragile.

I learned early how to shed
Not like a tree
but like a coat left on a cafeteria hook
bleach in the fabric, sweat in the collar
a coat you never return for
the zipper pulled once, abandoned.

At the Tehran Airport, someone lifted my suitcase by mistake
her hand where mine had been
"Sorry," she said, laughing
and for three seconds, our lives weighed the same
The handle warm between us like a shared secret
before we became strangers at separate gates.

Cities left marks
a scratched transit card
neon humming its cobalt bruise into puddles
voices I almost kept
or worked to forget
diesel in my hair like a warning
and the intercom crackled static prayers for Track 12.

In the Greyhound bathroom mirror, November
I saw my mother's jawline surface in mine
the same hard set she wore signing the lease
on our third apartment that year.

I turned sideways, recognizing the structure
I pressed my hand to the cold tile
the faucet dripped, counting my pulse.

One door remains closed
Behind it a slow, steady rhythm
or a radiator coughing like lungs
or the leftover breath of the apartment itself
I do not open it.

I stand here, hand on the knob, warm
I stand where the corridor narrows to a ribcage
the cold teeth of my keys biting my palm
I listen
The rhythm is my mother's walk up three flights of stairs
keys in her fist, late shift, early morning
I have lived here before

Ella Blair

yrs

After "Meditations in an Emergency" by Cameron Awkward-Rich

there's a dream i have in which i love the world. the poets and the priests and the potheads,
hotheads and heathens and hoes. all our kicked-in hearts beating, still—despite despite
despite. i want to mean something. i want this all to mean something. home is a gut feeling,
and i have it here. tell me it will get better. teeth sinking in—thick skin, soft throat. raw
from repetition. will you hear me this time?

hold on, hold on, hold on. knees bent, feet planted. i'm not going anywhere—i promise.
hamlet in a cardboard box, jesus at a strip mall. gummy smiles and acrylic nails. we're
fighting for you, too.

your head's in a smoke cloud and my heart's on your split lip. i'd walk this road til dawn if it
meant walking with you. we just have to make it to the morning, i swear. i swear. i swear.

hope is the only impossibility i believe in.

Participating Schools & Organizations by region

Capital Region

Albany Academy
Colonie Central High School
Emma Willard School
Hudson Valley Consortium - Homeschool
Ichabod Crane High School
Saratoga Springs High School
Schenectady High School
Shaker High School
Shenendehowa High School

Central New York

Cazenovia High School
Jamesville DeWitt High School

Finger Lakes

Lehman Alternative Community School
School of the Arts

Hudson Valley

Briarcliff High School
Cornwall Central High School
Haldane High School
Hastings High School
Rye High School
White Plains High School

Long Island

East Hampton High School
Elmont Memorial High School
Floral Park Memorial High School
Garden City High School
H. Frank Carey High School

Long Island (continued)

Half Hollow Hills High School East
Herricks High School
Jericho High School
John F. Kennedy High School
New Hyde Park Memorial High School
Sewanhaka High School
Shoreham-Wading River High School
Syosset High School
Valley Stream Memorial Junior High School
Valley Stream South High School
W. C. Mepham High School
Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School
William Floyd High School

Mohawk Valley

Cobleskill-Richmondville High School
Galway Junior-Senior High School
Holland Patent High School
Westmoreland Central School District

North Country

Adirondack Center for Writing
Little River Community School
Long Lake Central School

New York City

Fort Hamilton High School
Franklin D. Roosevelt High School
Fiorello H. Laguardia High School
Harris-Vaughan Academy - Homeschool
Horace Mann School
International High School for Health Sciences
KAPPA international High School
Notre Dame Academy High School
Saint Ann's School

New York City (continued)

Stuyvesant High School

Trevor Day School

WriteNYC

Southern Tier

Tiger Ventures

Unatego Central School District

Western New York

Jamestown High School