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Dear Tomorrow

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Luna Moth
Melanie Johnson

DEAR TOMORROW

When you come to me as an anxious loop
turning my mind like a tornado's hook echo,
I take your *what ifs* to the prairie. Most days

I shepherd my worries up the hill and back
through worn trails I share with coyotes,
following shadows of clouds like a funeral

procession. All my imagined crises alarm
my chest. My legs pray their way through
the grass labyrinth, a pilgrim of limestone,

bluestem, and yarrow. There is no hiding
here, not for me or the milkweed. I want
to see you and all your problems coming,

but instead I watch starlings and blackbirds
bicker over a pond. Bees flirt with goldenrod.
A hawk studies a rabbit before death unhoods

itself like a disappointed graduate. I try to feel
the faith of the hills when they let asters bruise
their edges without panic. Sometimes I don't

know if the wings flicking past my knees are
butterflies or grasshoppers. I don't know if
the almanac calls for good rain and calm winds

for my fluttering heart. And I don't know when
the vulture, that prairie phoenix, will resurrect
what's left of the rabbit. But I know the paths.

I know the seasons. I know you're coming
for me, and now I am steady as I walk my circle,
singing to every bird I startle from the grass.

Traci Brimhall is the author of four collections of poetry, most recently "Come the Slumberless from the Land of Nod." Her poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *Orion*, *The New York Times Magazine* and *The Best American Poetry*. She's received a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship and is currently the Poet Laureate of Kansas.