

# Waiting on the Wet Season

*Short poems from the AIRIE Lab*

*by*

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## **Gifts**

Every morning, the sky plays wind music,  
the wind plays tree music,  
the trees play bird music.

Thank you, sky.

Thank you, wind.

Thank you, trees.

## **The Writer**

Out on West Lake, plenty of wind  
ripples the green water and  
fish jump too quickly to see.

I have a sharp pencil  
and a notebook,  
pages empty.

## **Appointment**

Falling darkness reminds  
Chuck-will's-widow  
to join the insect song.

### **Ill-suited Companions**

A mud dauber has trapped herself  
inside my screened porch.  
Neither of us is happy about the situation.

### **Big Cypress**

On the Loop Road,  
I'm so used to spotting alligators,  
for a minute I wonder what rare creature  
that red Ford Mustang is.

### **Conclusion**

Inside the mud dauber's nest,  
forty paralyzed spiders twitch and wait  
to be eaten alive.

What is it about life that forces itself  
toward cruelty? That night,  
I crush a tiny black beetle  
in half with my knife.

What is one more death  
inside this killing machine?

### **Night in the AIRIE Lab**

In the dim studio, lizards dash madly  
across the floor, trying not to be seen.  
The fan blows scraps of paper, remnants  
of what I'm trying not to say.

### **Battle**

Outside the studio,  
two birds skirmish  
over the smallest palm;  
the other palms sit empty.

### **Lostmans River**

The mangroves take everything back—  
sugar cane boilers, bark boilers, cisterns  
encircled in their labyrinthine grasp.  
*Once, says the guide, a tree fell over,  
and we found human teeth in the roots.*

### **State Road 9336**

In the chain link fence  
outside the taco stand,  
a plastic bag mimics the anhinga,  
dries its wings in the afternoon wind.

### **Comforts**

The grass has grown and the heat is up.  
Tomorrow will be a good day  
to go out early,  
to come back drenched in sweat,  
to sit out the afternoon heat  
reading poetry.

### Coffee, 9:00 a.m.

Morning birds suggest their numbers,  
hidden in the dense scrub and slash pine.  
Clouds skate across the sky,  
high whole empires  
forming and dissolving, they race on,  
leaving, for a moment,  
thin trailings of milky-white-over-blue,  
vapor hieroglyphs, as if to say,  
“I was here. I existed.”

So too, for a moment, do we leave  
thin echoes of ourselves  
behind us—  
our work, our words, the way we loved—  
everything carried on by the wind,  
eventually.

### Feeding

A gator plunges to his right,  
arching  
from inaction  
to ferocity,  
jaws snapping  
from potential  
to energy.

The fish swim on around him,  
oblivious,  
or simply resigned  
to the existence  
of one less fish.

### **Scavenged**

A vulture's carcass has lost the war  
with a mower's blade.

All that's left now are scattered  
clumps of white and gray, a few  
suggestions of bone and sinew.

Don't feel bad—  
he was already dead, his eye  
plucked from his ruby head.

### **Sunset on Anhinga Trail**

Anhinga flaps and chortles—  
Grasshopper chomps  
on pond apple leaves—  
Alligator bellows across the marsh—  
once you start to listen,  
everyone has something to say.

### **Short-timer**

A red-shouldered hawk  
alights in my yard.  
Only one week left—  
not enough time  
to learn the name of every bird.