

# JOURNAL OF NATURE

MAGGIE BRODBECK



POETRY CONTEST FINALIST

Their wings flutter as they are lifted from their nest—  
a confused cacophony that must be ignored.  
Cradled in my arms, they hum with happiness,  
not knowing that the squeaking  
corner of the cart I push counts  
the seconds to their death.

When I reach the back room, I sigh  
at the remains of their sisters scattered about  
and the three hours left in my shift.  
I shut my eyes at what I am about to commit,  
unable to even spare a look at the names  
along the spines that I snap.

And I grossly admire  
their insides—  
the beautiful black and white entrails  
carved out by my hand's blade.

Each time, I grab the next one off the cart  
to prepare its final rites, I raise it to my face  
and inhale the sweet vanilla musk of its pages.  
A final goodbye, a flurry of lashes, a kiss of sorts  
to thank it.

