

Surprise Valley Poetry Prize
February's Winner

The Eyes of Horses

By Charles F. Thielman

Hot wind a coarse brush
through black manes and cut hay.

Dusk absorbs
sunset's plaited gnosis
into its deep blue wings.

What survives this season
turns its back to the sky,
rests on dark arms

and lets dry yellow stones
fall into buried deltas.

Lantern lit, placed close to wire coil,

hooves plant crescents in loam
while bales, lined up at arm's length,
release their last green to starlight.

Wagon, rein and halter, sweat
crusted necks to sun-burned hands,
sky a promise of more dust,

of hot yellow light
edging the shadows of five oaks.

The swing-set chains and seats

pushed by this wind
as the kitchen window becomes a beacon.

Charles F. Thielman of Eugene, Oregon, is co-owner of an independent bookstore with adjacent performance venue. He is the Surprise Valley Poetry Prize winner for February.

Honorable Mention

Refuge

By Bonnie Hobbs

The wind is harsh, the world is wailing.
My bones nestle down and sigh.
In you I hear a true heart beating,
Refuge for a soul who cries.

Sunrise fans its blood-red feathers.
Pigeons moan and soar away.
A rooster stretches up for kisses.
An owl flaps in and settles for the day.

Aged barn, rugged shelter,
Looming tall, arms rough-hewn beams,
Piled inside, things wait and wonder,
Stored against uncertain dreams.

Bonnie Hobbs lives in the Klamath Basin and writes historical novels set in the American West.