

March for Me

by Matt DeVirgiliis

Starlings screech and swarm fresh suet that dangles from a shepherd's hook. Hatchlings scream as mom flitters low across the street.

A son packs his bag - bottled water, extra masks, and jerky. Mom paces behind him. "Don't go." She tugs his arm. Once. Twice. He turns and hugs her, his long and lean body enveloping her. "I have to march, Mom," he says.

"I know." Her eyes narrow and her chin points firm. "March for me. March for this quiet town." She runs her hands from his round shoulders, down his arms, to his large hands.

He walks to his car and throws his bag in the backseat. "I'll see you tonight," he says. Mom stands on the front porch. She smiles, lips sealed shut. His truck's motor rumbles as he drives down the street passing his sleeping neighbors' homes. Starlings chatter and fly high into the white oaks and disappear behind the foliage.

