

Yellowstone Bear

by Deirdre Hines

In my father's chest of drawers
there's a faded yellow box of slides
the old grey projector unveils
on his peeling kitchen wall every
summer in the middle of July.

I wore that T-shirt for months .

How many times had I heard
the tales of that old T-shirt
from its arrival in Havard
to its final burial in a bin
in Yellowstone National Park?

The bears avoided the smell.

I always thought his frugal
was because of a childhood
fed on rations in a London
bunker where the women
taught him how to knit

I still have the scar.

The car accident he had after
collecting the deceased
concussed his undertaker boss
sent my father wandering off
in the opposite direction

The body landed in the meadowsweet .

Isn't that what we are all
compelled to do though?

Set our internal compasses
to our own course, forgetting
all about the planets above us.

That night in Yellowstone I dreamed of bears.

Each seed he collected
from his night in that park
was wrapped in a hanky
before he found some edibles
in a Yellowstone picnic bin

They thought I was one of them .

Now each time I look at him
wandering through the house
I think I see the shadow
of an old black bear
standing on its hindpaws
looking up into the stars
as my father snores
on the picnic bench below.