

## **GOODBYE COMFORT ZONE**

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*Third Place, Poetry*

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Cottonwoods in my hometown  
spit messy cotton in the air,  
filled window wells and  
swirled in the corners by the back door.

Mother's voice made me laugh, like  
Ethel Merman singing on a spring day.  
Dad had a dirty habit.  
He'd spit in the waste basket,  
but the inside of his car was spotless.

The white kitchen table  
needed nourishment,  
a coat of paint, tightened screws.  
Hundreds had eaten from her surface.  
Now, she was tired and hungry.

I, too, starved for recovery, ate  
up the opportunity for rebirth.  
I wrote with a Magic Marker  
on helium-filled balloons  
my resentments,  
then let them go  
upward and out of sight  
into the azure autumn sky.

I quit shaving my legs  
threw out the iron. Come summer  
I ate watermelon cold with  
texture and crunch.  
I cleaned my side of the street.  
I didn't drink.

I saw a pair at Steinmart  
Leopard high heels that pinched my toes  
yet looked so fine. The pragmatist  
in me said don't buy them.  
I bought them anyway.