When the Poem Stands Me Up.

Gina Tranisi

I take my boyfriend to Tracks Lounge
for hot chicken, contemplate calling him
my latest love, settle for ordering another
round instead. When the poem hides,
I do not seek. I run sprints at the gym
until my knees crumple and ache. When
the poem isn't a poem—not star cluster,
not petals or pedals pressed, not fresh-edged
lawn, not hot-ironed flag, not ticking watch,
not champagne tongue, not string of amethyst
smooth enough to show the boy I keep kissing—
I put on a fresh pot of coffee. I call myself
patient until it becomes a polished crown.
I wait and wait and put off falling in love
until the poem knocks its big slow fist
on my front door, shakes out its curls,
and takes his shape.

As Co-Executive Director of the Nebraska Writers Collective (NWC) and lifelong Nebraskan, Gina Tranisi (she/her) works closely with the youth spoken word poetry festival, All Writes Reserved. She leads writing workshops inside correctional facilities through Writers' Block, an NWC-sponsored program that brings creative opportunities to incarcerated writers. A finalist for december magazine's 2020 Jeff Marks Memorial Poetry Prize and runner-up for the Writer's Foundry Review 2022 Poetry Prize, Gina's work has appeared in Rattle, The Rumpus, Young Scholars in Writing, One Magazine, and other journals. In her free time, she enjoys kitchen-dancing, car karaoke, hiking, and reading. Gina holds a B.A. and M.A. in English from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.