# Blue Riff

I watch my niece pour shots
of ice-blue liquid freedom
for her freshly-18 brother
and his friends.
She shivers as neon flames
lick her throat, and sticks out
her turquoise tongue
to confirm her entry
into the midnight club.

Indigo trombones tickle my nose,
wiggle my neck loose.
My head swings as the blues
ribbon through my hair.
Ivories trill in cobalt air thick
with cigar smoke and whisky,
tremolo my torso to shimmy and sway.
I've forgotten who, what and where.
Please don't look in these eyes—-
you are gone gone gone.

The sky eyes me lying beneath it,
rolls, slides, shifts across its snare drum.
Orange-blue slow sizzles under my eyelids.
What will the blue-black of gone taste like
when the ant on my ankle is right?

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Hemat Malak is an accountant from Sydney, Australia, who returned to poetry in 2024 after over 45 years of distraction. Her writing often responds to life's frustrations and the search for meaning. What she loves most about poetry is its magic—that invisible hand that reveals secrets when you allow it. Hemat is a Best New Poets nominee, and her poems have appeared in places including Rattle, Rochford Street Review, Catchment Literary Journal, Locative Magazine, Short Stories Unlimited and anthologies from WestWords and WA Poets.