

WE KNOW THIS DANCE by Riley Gay

Before hearts learn to beat,
they learn to listen. They tie
their ropes around the nearest
song, pull tight, and
beg their body
to join.

There is a dance this land
has taught us. Even the flickering
tongue who swallows our fields
knows the beat. Each flaming footstep,
each breath of smoke, each
blade of prairie, each fistful
of earth is unpredictable,
yet perfectly
in time.

We know this dance because
the heartland sings it
to every heart willing to hear
its wide skies and gentle
edges. We throb with the rise
and fall of golden hills, with
the up and down of the day.

We know this dance because
our lungs found the patterns in the
wind, and they didn't let go.
They found dust and pollen and
laughter and smoke. Our chests
learned not to sputter,
but to breathe one breath
and then another.

We know this dance because
we have spent our dawns
craving to climb next to
fire. We watch as it swells
with our golden hills. We watch
as it swells with the sunrise.
We watch as it waits, and as
it listens—as it ties
its ropes around
the rhythm and
pulls tight.

We know this dance because
this land has a heart that is
beating.