



VERSE IN PLACE

J. DREW LANHAM

Lifeless List

Do you know
how hard it is
to admire plumage on a bird?
To separate one warbler chip note
from another?
Or count
the telltale hind wing spots
on a butterfly?
Or remember the name of a wildflower
seen a hundred times?
Or gather the energy to find the
Latin binomial of a beetle in a field guide?
Or even give a fuck what the name
of anything is
beyond the last Black body that
lay still after being murdered
by the police?
I can no longer keep track
of the last hurricane that blew in from the earth's rising heat.
Of the last tweet inciting riot.
The last fire that burned and burned
and burned.
Of the hundreds of thousands of infected and dead.
It is a sad exhausting lifeless list I'd rather not keep,
growing longer by the hour.
There's little room left in my heart these dark days
for listing anything.
Hardest task comes
in not becoming a member
of a litany of dread.

From *Sparrow Envy: Field Guide to Birds and Lesser Beasts*, Hub City Press, 2021. Reprinted by permission of the author.

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