

**Refuge**  
by Robert Fanning

Take refuge in the barren field, snow-draped and fallow. In a Ferris wheel, thick fog. Take refuge in the empty subway, urine-dank and midnight. In the shadowed figure, the hallway light. In the one who might take you far away. In satellite dishes tipped toward stars. In the mind's electric wiring. Take refuge in the life you extinguish, the child you hold. Through windows of a crowded train, a sky you've forsaken, the sea blue allure of a wall, the stairway down. In fear's mosquito hum, the abandoned evening. Take refuge in a coastal breeze, in the blood-red flag of the heart that won't let go. In the faded slogan on a derelict billboard. A streetlight blinking in a dead city. In the bitter winter river, the one you can't forget. In the dizzy green toy of your childhood. In long-awaited rain. In the oasis of a full bowl of milk. Take refuge behind the scarlet wall, your back against a cool dam. In sprawling tenements, the rare jewels of light. In lying upon the dirt. In your dome of sticks, your well-wrapped grief. In your luxury fortress, your ravaged country, in the storm bearing down, take refuge. In your scattered family, in hunger, in seduction's long silk dusk. In the simple bread of friendship, the cathedral of your regret. Take refuge in the moment before rising, the tilt-a-whirl of fleeting bliss. In respite from thirst, the lifted tide, the broken road that once led home. In the swaying garment, the heaven of what may bathe or drown you. Take refuge in a crack in your government's fallen pillar, in a brick shack beaten by heat, in the flagrant red tapestry of fire. In the dress you've borrowed for the dance, the home you built together. In the stained wallpaper, the falling china cup of a secret. Take refuge in the ancient house of war. In a broken bus, the cacophony of strangers talking. In letting someone drink of your life, take refuge. In the eyes of the child who can't bear your going. In chasing what you know you'll never reach. In your home at the end of the long blue Earth.

From *Our Sudden Museum* (Salmon Poetry, 2017; poem used with permission of the author)