

Bird Feeder

by Elina Petrova

A cardinal snacks on sunflower seeds.
Two feet from the feeder to my patio table — blue,
with yellow chairs just painted by my father.

A year together. Three days he's been
back in Ukraine, in his *safe* village... "he's got family" —
I lull my conscience, bitch.

The bird feeder (the forked leg of whose iron pole
my dad straightened to pull the squirrel baffle on) —
the heart of my yard.

It's full of flying beings.
Wrens with chickadees. Finches, klutzy doves.
And here is my favorite — the cardinal.

Buses. Buses to the no-fly zone. Pushing
bags forward and hopes forth. Krakow →
border → Lviv → Uman → Kyiv.

Dad stopped by Kraków, I saw him
in a dream, an aged traveling monk: coarse
gray frock with a cowl and a rope belt.
The monk?

Even in mom's hospice ward
he never talked beyond things to bring, buy or fix—
anything but intangible, winged, of Spirit.
But doesn't Spirit mean love in verb form?
Why can't I, a birder, *fix* father's burdens?
As my neighbor says:
"Bring 'em *all* from Ukraine."