Late September,

Carlene M. Gadapee

and another summer's gone by without us

sitting on the deck in the gloaming, surrounded

by late robin-calls, the fairy lights in the trees,

and the welcoming embrace of darkness.

The chiminea remains shrouded, five summers

now, waiting for us to live the life it's purposed

for. We have set the stage diligently, the chairs

and glider, the gas grill, all under cover, all

waiting. I'm still waiting. I could sit alone,

swatting at rogue mosquitos, slow-drinking

a solitary glass of cold white wine. I could

watch the condensation ease down over

the curve of the glass, collect in a minor

torrent, make a slow cascade down the stem,

pool up at the base, mark a temporary

ring on the tabletop in the vestiges of dust

and pollen. But I don't. I look at shapes of trees

as they become indistinct, a blurred version

of what was planned, what came to be, what

bore fruit or not. I watch the tiny lights blink,

blue and white, blue and white, while birds

go home to their nests. They understand that

summer is just a season.

Long Before Eurylochus Killed the Cattle of Helios,

I invented a song to Io, heifer-princess, unwilling bedmate

of Zeus. Tired men join in, voices weak from weeping

and hungry for a hero. I've seen Odysseus at his best, more

often at his worst, and he always invents a glossy tale to lure

this herd back into the fold. He promises greener pastures,

ample grain, and future safety. Around feeble campfires, we

warm our stiff fingers and scan the smoky horizon for a sign.

Any sign. Men's voices are as low as prayer. Like confused cows,

they huddle together for warmth and simple companionship,

a depleted herd, poor brainless beasts. They keen and mourn

as if seeking their barn, their crafty cowherd.

Framed by sunset-rays of blood and gold, Odysseus appears,

Circe and swine finally abandoned. He has remembered

loyal men, the ones who stayed behind. Their hero brings

bushel-baskets of boasts and excuses, woven out of dreams

and desires—his. So much sweet fodder to share, to fill empty

bellies. We capture a bull, one of our own, a perfect sacrifice

to his barnyard stories—shallow valor. We gild horns and slit

a ropy throat, hoping to win someone's favor, maybe his,

maybe the gods'. Is there a difference? Roasting thigh meat

reminds me of other hungers not so easily fed. Libations

are poured and wine flows like blood, like hearts, like pain.

The men low and moan again. Tears and fat stain their tunics.



Poet and English teacher **Carlene M. Gadapee** lives in northern New Hampshire with her husband, several fruit trees, a pom-doxie dog, and two beehives. She is the author of two chapbooks of poetry, *Relearning the Body* (Finishing Line Press, 2026) and *What to Keep* (Finishing Line Press, 2025). Other poems and reviews can be found in many journals including *Allium, Smoky Quartz, Touchstone, MockingOwlRoost, Vox Populi,* and *MicroLit Almanac*.