A thick-crusted exoskeleton crawls like a time capsule over my son’s open hand. I don’t know that he’s ever been happier, making a bridge of his little palm and fingers, a sanctuary between the driveway and the concrete floor of the garage.

It’s almost as if it knows the difference between his tenderness and my tendency to kill insects. When I step closer, it rolls itself into a rigid ball.
I step back and watch it unfurl, crawling
once more over the bridge of his hand

as if choosing to live, to feel
his warmth and tenderness again.

Brandon McQuade was born and raised in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada. He earned his B.A. from the University of New Brunswick Saint John and his M. Phil in Irish Writing from Trinity College Dublin. For a selection of poems from his second collection, Bodies, he was the recipient of the 2022 Neltje Blanchan Memorial Writing Award. He lives in Northern Wyoming with his wife and their children.