Not asking for anything. Come only that close.
Through the woods, the field, she has come
to the far edge our lawn to sleep on the northern side
of our home. In air below freezing, the dog
twitches in her dreams, her coat red
and shining in late afternoon sun.

We take turns staring down at her from the house
we have been in for a long time, here
to open all our gifts, eat the meal
prepared for us, fill our mouths often
with sweets and with wine. A mother
with her children come home we cannot
still ourselves over this dog strayed. How hard
just to watch her, asleep and dreaming on the edge of wild.
We pick out what game to play, what songs
we want to hear sung and we stay
on this side of the window.

Denise Pendleton holds an MFA in Poetry from Washington University and is a recipient of The Jinx Walker Poetry Prize of the Academy of the American Poets. Her poems have appeared in American Sports Poems edited by May Swenson and Northwest Review, Tar River Poetry, and Kerning among others. Pendleton has taught writing to college students and held a variety of nonprofit jobs as an educator “from the balcony” to promote reading for all ages.