## Science Fiction and Fantasy Poetry Association Annual Contest Long Form Winner, 2025

## irish weather

by Quinn Young

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"We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried.
Most people were silent."
J. Robert Oppenheimer
there were dog whelks in the river,
unshelled, bodies tender, pale as dreams
in irradiat—
—wakewater;
       (she will see you lower
               the long-handled steer—)
she kneels in horsetracks,
lifts a white plastic cup
               (this crushed mouth open)
       that cuts her hand
       by the edge
  of the
       water
soaked down in ashes
fluttering like infant heartbeat
through fingers stirring, catching black
as the tins and cracked glass
laid out for rain—
-water,
rotten iron ring (at her temples)—
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Ériu, sleep long Hibernia (my sister, Ireland) our hearts stopped beating / ... / at the same time matterstrike catalyst element evacuat uranium (two—three—five) bodysickness, rocksick she picks / the songbird open skeleton (reactive) dog keening at the gate, at phantom footsteps trailing the wet path beyond, low clouds heavy black portending rain— —water, yet here now a suncloud (thin enough to break through) this gathering of lowland fog, horned woman of Crete (oh bull of the Americas) thundering hooves and windgrit mane, thickbread soaked / in goatsmilk and water, listen as the pullwheel grinds the pyre stone, a mirror

(one)

flash

of

light)

over the plateau, the sea-side lean-to, sea without salt,

following the long winter, jagged ice bitten (...) winter—

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there were some
       who saw the bloom of darkness as it came
the tear in our time
               it burned our eyes and we saw nothing
       as a great exhalation bowed the rocks and
       rolled against us
who jumped into the
water to escape it
       and burned when coming up for air,
graveyards remain
with burned black facings /
/ beggar's teeth (on the grey sky)
on the million souls speared through,
raven yards—
a castle stood
where clots of hair fall
under thin shears,
dance this night round
       and strike up the céilí
for the rearing
       bonfire effigy
of
       splitstuff core, hollow scale,
       the talons of
       her daughter,
bird save wing;
the waves churned though she
kept above them, holding tight
her burden
little girl of eleven limbs,
white palms embryonic in the sea womb— it
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rains.