

# The Bridge

Nicole M. K. Eiden

*Winner of the 2023 LMNL Broadside Poetry Contest*

---

In the morning darkness  
everything turns elemental  
sock and shoe

a gulp of yesterday's coffee to survive  
the hardest part, the  
not feeling like myself

pushing through to get  
past the empty road, I find  
not the quiet I

try to cultivate, but  
the definitive quiet  
all around

there is nothing  
but the wheel, my hand, this coffee and  
one, two, three brown pelicans looking

for food, searching like me  
in this open space  
the birds nudge me to move

beyond this savage morning, over this  
immeasurable bridge is  
what is delicate, is what enters

when urgency falls away here's  
my grandmother, her cabinet full  
of dates bought on sale

here's my grandma, drawing curtains on a  
pulley, tucking me into darkness  
here's my friend's redheaded baby

all have gone before me  
it's a growing list like  
a mission, this quiet bridge

those I've loved deeply  
those I've loved as much as I could  
I will see you up ahead