Ordinal Linguistic Personification
by Andrea Smith

Number One is in her early sixties.

She married number Two, but she is older by five years.

One and Two adopted ten years ago. Her name is Three.

She has auburn hair; They have grey.

Four lives down the street.
Three walks with him to the middle school together. They have been friends since Three moved there.

Four has a crush on high school freshman, Five.

Five dyed her hair black like her older sister, Ten.
Ten plays the drums for Shotgun Turkey and smokes weed in the school parking lot with the teachers.

The older kids, Seven, Eight, and Nine, pretend to like Five so they can get close to Ten. They talk about the way Five walks, behind her back.

Ten doesn't care, though, not since she started dating Twelve.

Twelve's little brother Six has a crush on Seven.

Five is jealous.

Four is jealous because Five is jealous.

He has always liked her.

He has dibs, had it since they were two.

The high school principal, Thirty-Nine, waits for the days she can move to Redding and raise alpacas.
Her brother, Twenty-Nine, lives there with his wife, Twenty-One.

They’re expecting a baby soon.

Thirty-Nine had given up her baby that she had with the preacher’s youngest son, Eighteen, thirteen years ago.

She has never seen Eighteen since.

His daddy moved them out of the state the summer the girl was born.

Eighteen died in a car crash, months later, after sneaking out to visit her, or at least that’s what the woman on the phone said.

There was not an obituary.

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**Chora**

by Wenona Jonker

In the moments before a storm
Of air holding its breath
Of agitated trees that whisper
Quietly to soil restless for drink
Whispers of hopes
When we balance between expecting and expected
And feel it build with atmospheric pressure
Potential energy
And then like a deep
Breath out
All at once emptied
The smell of hot, wet ground
Of sky and earth
There to breathe
And to help us breathe
If we plant our feet
Like trees with inky leaves
Wet with promises

I wonder if there is a whole life
Caught up
In the moment before rain
In letting sky and earth
Be pregnant with us
Or if a poem
Is nothing but the middle space
Between expecting and expected
Through which all passes
But nothing is retained
Prior to birth
After language
If we live not merely hoping
And having hopes answered

But always inhaling
Always exhaling