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And Nature Sings

Barbara Blanks

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The Worst Disaster Ever

JESSICA GONSOULIN

Maybe a shark head-bumped
 a piling of the oil rig in the Gulf,
 tapping into secret volcanoes,
 exploding the rig in a meteor shower.
 The drill pipe bent like a soda straw
 and sank 5000 feet,
 regurgitating oil
 like an artery in a brain hemorrhage.
 Oil floated up and spread out,
 covering the surface of the water
 with smothering black shadows.
 Fingers of fire shrieked for help.
 Flames gobbled up the floor
 as alarms sounded like a rock band,

and workers dived in the cool water.
 The oil headed along the Southern coast
 to be swept into the loop current.
 Fishing came to a stop—forbidden.
 Fishermen volunteered for cleanup
 like soldiers going off to war.
 Zoologists bathed turtles and seagulls
 and shipped them off to distant wetlands.
 Meanwhile, BP made numerous attempts
 to cut off the flow with engineering schemes,
 such as Top Shot, Top Kill, and LMP,
 knocking out Hazmat crews on the beaches
 with cleanup chemicals as all waited weeks
 for sure-fire relief wells to be ready.

And Nature Sings

BARBARA BLANKS

In a field-site forest in North Carolina,
 surrounded by corn and cotton fields,
 sound is cushioned and hushed
 by pine needles littering the ground.
 There, a biologist hooked microphones
 to loblolly branches,
 rigged up recording equipment,
 and left the stage to the players:
 Mice.
 She was not trying to capture
 the chitter and squeaking of lab mice,
 but the secret songs sung in the wild.

She almost missed it—
 a sound too high for human ears to hear.
 But played at slow speed
 to lower the frequency,
 she heard a four-note song—
 the plaintive,
 lyrical rise and fall
 of a deer mouse crooning,
 sounding a bit like the love song of a whale.