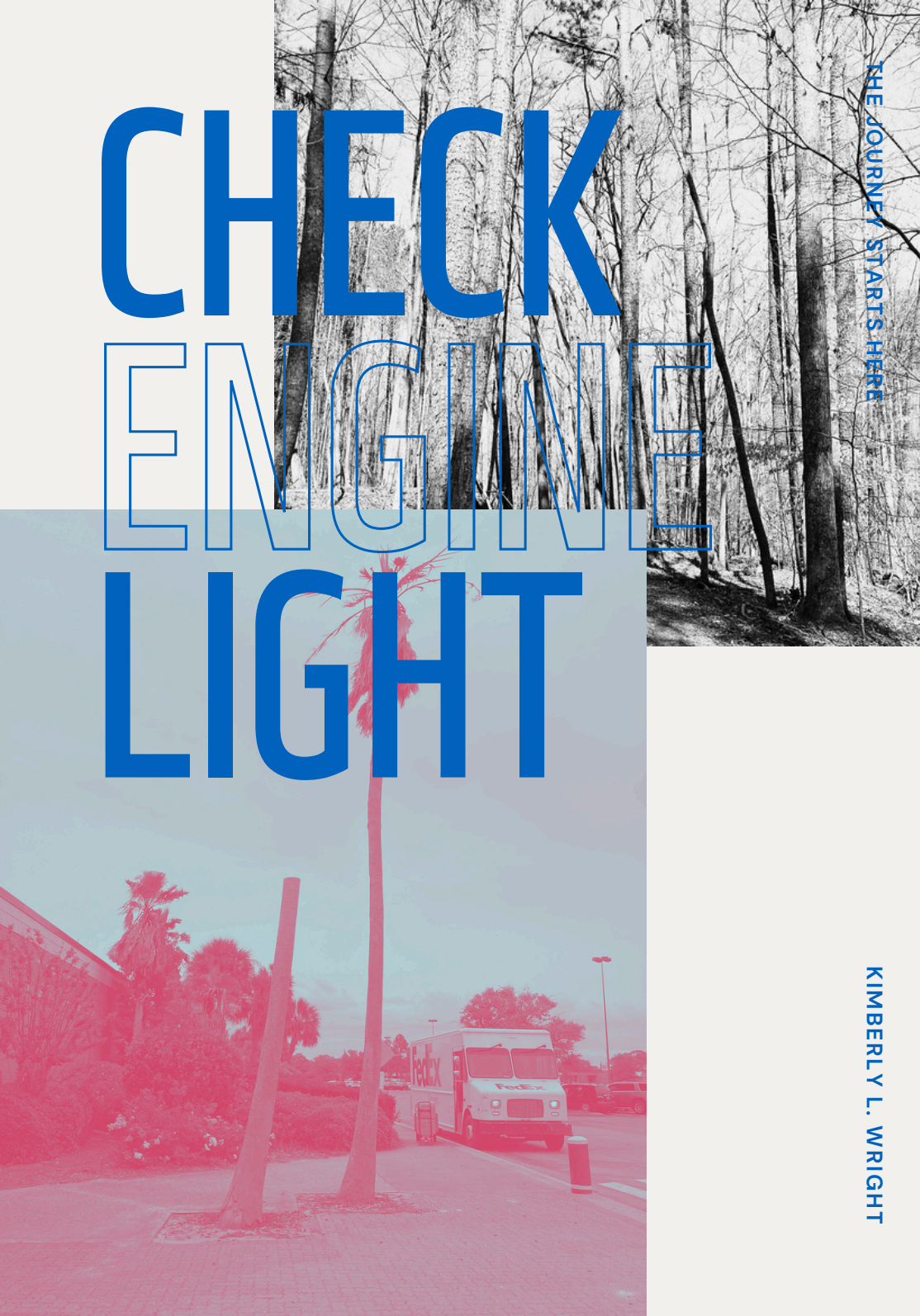


THE JOURNEY STARTS HERE

CHECK ENGINE LIGHT



KIMBERLY L. WRIGHT

SATURN

Stars don't align properly.
Been smelling the turpentine

of failure on this one for a while, white body
a cold planet bloated with methane,

slunk out in the middle of the night,
claimed he couldn't go back to sleep.

I had glided out of his orbit,
playing possum

on the couch when he departed
without a word, the noise betraying –

big bang of the storm door crashing against him
as he dropped something in the doorway

I imagined his eccentric wobbles
in the front yard's dark

stumbling over the Milky Way's chipmunk holes
and asteroids, the rocky matter

of Saturn's rings uneven as the fumbling
moves of so-called courtship,

the dance of the sprained ankle,
stars too dim for him to chart a course –

no vision, no ganas, no O2 to support breath.
The only Saturn he can locate –

the white one he rode in on.
He who drives a Saturn
has hard time finding parts –
(not the only thing no longer being made.)

When it breaks down like he's broken down,
slam the hood and haul it off.



GETTING THERE

is part of the fun

Loads of tires shredded down to steel belts,
the debris field complicates the journey
of those speeding between necessities,
rubber clods to be maneuvered around.

Bonded 1965 Dodge, a mottled jester
putters along a mocking 45 mph
in a 70 mph zone, tailpipe rolling out carbon
like Frisco Bay fog over the mountains,
minus beauty and plus smokiness
and you're stuck choking, a chicken
locked in a small metal cage, one
of the delirious, puffs of petrified feathers
a free blur as the impatient whiz by.

In the road's margins scatters bulky scat -
once whole things someone had
half-assed strapped to a trailer,
a Sanford and Son collection,
2 by 4s shattered into thorns
hubcap UFOs bouncing and rolling,
a loveseat with love knocked out of it,
a Harley worth thousands until
a sudden loss, 70 to 0 in 10
clattering seconds
decelerating in awkward somersaults,
a chrome meteor shower.

CHECK ENGINE

Constant as the North Star
in the dashboard constellation

an ignored warning on the black and orange horizon
where glowing indicators and digital numbers
twinkle, silent and constant, from the metal, plastic, circuitry

occasional grunts and groans mixed in from the beyond
among the grumbles of the living engine, struggling
like we all do over the hill, the burden of gravity

wheels rattling over the same pitted pavement
between here and there, star stuff the dust on the hood,
a cosmos of a thousand small paint scratches

and in the cabin the odometer spirals,
getting closer to the end as the numbers grow,
bad news deferred until the go is gone.

DISPOSITION OF THE CORPSE

We made cars in our image,
vessels in which surge a disgusting assortment
of hazardous fluids, high voltage, hoses and wires,
things that must be monitored, flushed, not touched.

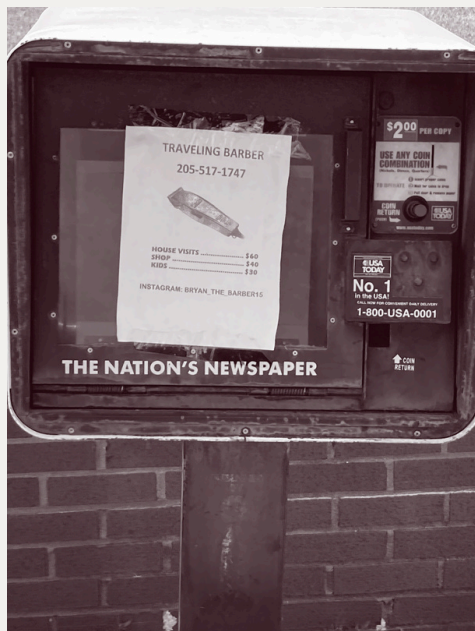
Our urine, blood, tears, mucus,
stomach acid, feces, vaginal secretions
give way to oil, gas, hydraulic and transmission fluids,
freon, battery acid. When new,
we are beautiful, state of the art,
a pride and joy heralded in billboards, parties and photo albums
bathed in wax, holy water and baby oil
shrouded with tarps and blankets
primed and sent on our way
with a slap on the bottom, a tap on the gas pedal.

When we collide, go wrong, gush,
explode, sputter steam, turn to mush,
oh the mess, the mess. The stuff coursing in tubes
beneath flesh and metal corrodes carapaces.
Time and elements make us Superfund sites
oozing carcinogenic goo out of the fractures
of ourselves. Dealing with the cleanup
requires strict rules of engagement,
protective gear of rubber and latex,

specifics of disposal not always followed.
Some wind up unlawfully used and discarded,
an 11-year-old girl taken from her apartment

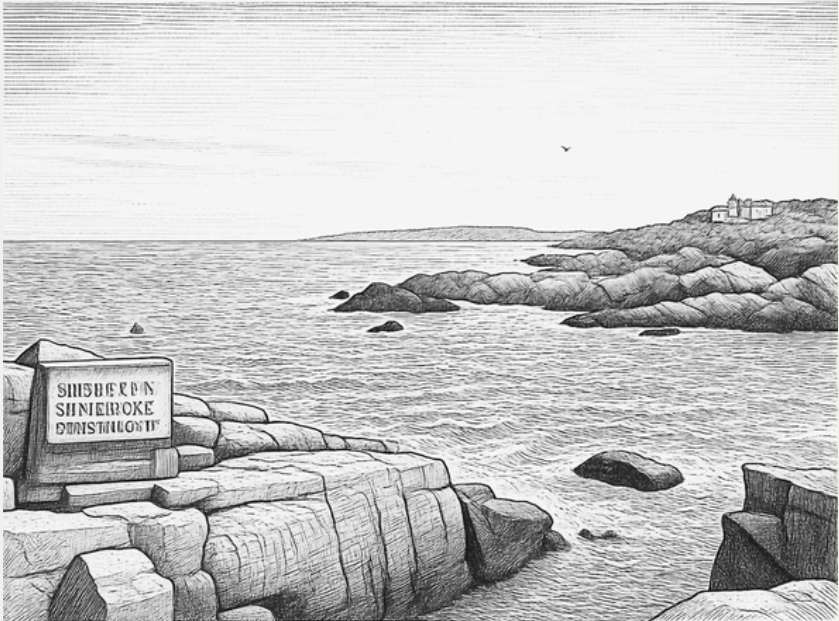
late on a summer's night through an unlocked window,
discovered on Thanksgiving by hunters in a hedgerow,
relic of patchy dried flesh on bones,
a tiny tuft of hair twisting on her scalp.
Even diminished, the girl attended a hearing,
testifying in the only way she could,
as a small skin sample zip-closed
in a plastic bag kept in a cooler
across the table from the grinning defective
dangerous thing that collided into her.

Some land far from justice, no chance
of finding the courtroom as they turn
into swirling factory dust, little shards of glass,
melted lumps of metal, rhododendrons of the road,
in great numbers, murderous clockwork
thousands upon thousands, unidentifiable.



NOTE

Most of these poems were featured in *Not Pictured*, published by Finishing Line Press in 2020. Available at Finishing Line Press and most book sellers.



Created in 2026.
To learn more about Kimberly L. Wright's poetry, visit KimberlyWright.net.
Also visit WrightWords.org if you need editing or writing help.