Holding Hands
by Britney McDonald

When he held my hand,
I didn’t know if I liked him.
I thought I liked the way he
Watched me walk away with a smile,
The way he said “yes” and “thank you,”
The way I could see his bedroom window
From the place where I slept,
I knew he was cute and funny.
And then he was holding my hand,
And everyone was saying he was perfect
For me.
And I panicked.

I leaned into him,
Not because he was holding my hand,
But because he was I wanted to
Feel him anyway.
He held it nervous and wrong,
With my thumb caught in his palm.
And his breath rattling in my ears,
Racking my body up higher & higher.

For the first time in years
My heart was mine,
Its blood pumped at my discretion.
It had no poison to deplete.
And I had just gotten used to
Watching it beat in still water,
Beating for me.

And then he held my hand
And I knew I wasn’t ready
To give away the freedom I barely learned I had,
To commit myself away when
I had already made a promise to me.

He was holding my hand
But only with his hand.
If he could have seen inside of me,
He would have known
He had just lost his only chance.

Just A Few Concerns
by Jeannie Woller

Who’s to say when I pray
The sound delay from my voice to the sky
Is point five seconds?

It isn’t.
It’s instant.

But sometimes I’m put on hold.
Waiting.
As the elevator music swirling around in my ears
Is nothing but the same insecurities that made me fall
to my knees
And ask a man to forgive me.

The feminist in me wants to pull out my pepper spray
And say
Stay the hell away from me,
But I don’t.
I just squint tighter
And tell my friends I stopped praying years ago.

Maybe prayer’s a placebo.
A cube of sugar I swallow
Two to three times a week
Handed to me by a man in white scrubs
Who has yet to scrub the blood
From the holes
In his hands
As he reaches for a soul that may have already
Been lost.

It’s no question that I question
His motives.
Because who’s blood is on his hands?
His own?
Or the millions of people who,
Dying.
Cry out his name.