

Woolen Hibernation

She twined a strand of green wool
yarn around the knitting needle—
thirty-four rows, ten to go, and millions
more hats before the memories were
wrapped in careful stitches.

Her apartment was draped with
skeins of yarn and rounded peaks
of finished hats that would never
embrace a chilled head. Spindly
loops of red cotton yarn obscured
her guitar and the joyful melodies
she once plucked on its strings.

On her seventh-floor deck, caps of
delicate white alpaca had blackened
her tomato plants and the hunger for
sun-cooked tomato sauce on her lips.

A towering mass of all
shades and textures buried
the little metal deck table whe-
re she had once sipped jasmine tea

with the black-haired man she loved
under a sky brushed with equal
amounts of purple, pink,
orange, and blue.

The swivel of her rigid needles
after a stitch was the only motion
in the apartment other than the
noiseless plummet of knit hats
over the deck ledge as they slid
from the crests of swelling piles.

A young girl was the first to pry a soft
hat from the brittle oak leaves
beneath the deck and tuck her chilled
head into the wool's soothing warmth.

She was unaware that the heart
of the hat's crafter had long ago
solidified into a taut ball of yarn.

By Olivia Marshburn-Ersek