

## **This year**

By John Heath – Washington, D.C.

Skeletons on suburban lawns  
never used to scare me. Sometimes you would spot them  
lounging in Adirondack chairs with rakish hats,  
leering at passersby. Rigged with live wires  
their jaws chattered inanely, their eyes winked, and their arms waved.  
Sometimes they raised Martinis to putative lips never  
meant for kissing. But this year the skeletons  
are ten-feet tall, not seated but crouching,  
ready to pounce. Spiders the size of dinner plates  
scuttle up their legs and bats feather silently  
by sightless eyes, for this is  
the Year of the Drone, so many lives taken in so many  
forgotten corners. One moment a child is hugging a doll in the dust,  
seconds away from the fond ministrations of that  
eye in the sky, whose purpose is to ensure  
that the unexpected lilt of a smile in the rubble  
should be recast as a rictus.

—October 31, 2024