

On the Pardoning of Two Thanksgiving Turkeys

by the President of the United States of America

JENNIFER PERRINE

For this particular sentence, there is a reprieve
because there's a precedent, an annual event
stretching back to Harry Truman's postwar days, lurking

in every presidential November for the last
sixty years, until now, as I watch the latest lame
duck shake his plumes in the Washington wind. The turkeys

whose doom he's commuting—one for the ceremony,
one on reserve should the first bird fail in its duties,
both exceptional in that they've been groomed to accept

a human touch—this year, they've been dubbed *May* and *Flower*,
names chosen through internet voting, barely besting
Wish and Bone, *Wing* and *Prayer* as official titles, terms

that suggest we hunger but harbor only slim hope
for more than this chorus of blissful gobbling, our plea
bargain in which we beg for gratitude, thanks, mercy.