

*From Looking for Water*  
By Wendy Buffington

*At the Bingo Hall Minutes After My  
Father's Diagnosis*

We plant our packed sandwiches close  
to the red-lit board and whirring  
box of plastic balls. Blue-tinged smoke  
tongues the ceiling. Burgers spit grease  
on the grill. My mother sputters off for specials—  
triangle game, coverall, maybe  
the stamp game—casts me a fish-eyed glare,  
neon Dabbo dobber knuckled tight in her fist.  
I whisper to him, *Don't leave me with her.*

He fans out his cards as the caller  
drops the balls for early birds. They flutter  
in their cage—red, yellow, green, white, blue—  
like a flock of parrots, and as we wait  
to see which will be caught, he turns, *Kid, it's you.*