“Now the Sun Has Come to Earth”

Ken Brewer

*From Ian Campbell’s “The Sun Is Burning,”
sung by Kate Wolf (Gold in California)*

1.

All summer we watch
the white-lined sphinx at dusk
gathering nectar in Bobbie’s flowers.
Bergamot seems a favorite.

The caterpillar, though, eats
my evening primrose
and I’d be angry save
the metamorphosis.

On summer twilights
I’ve been known to pull a lawn chair
to a stand of evening primrose
and stare as the yellow blossoms un-
fold like small suns
bursting open in the dark.
I will also watch the sphinx
hover from flower to flower for hours.

2.

The first summer of the 21st century
we drive the 40 miles to Ogden
every day of May and June
so a human sun can burn

through the crosshairs of four tattoos
on Bobbie’s body, small crosses
nearly invisible, unlike
the rose on her shoulder.
In the hospital waiting room, each day I add some pieces
to a jigsaw puzzle, a half-formed schooner on a half-formed sea.

3.

On a map I have, the radiation fallout from the Nevada tests
stretch like black fingers across the country west to east and beyond.

Utah is not visible on the map. Nothing but black on the spot
where over a million people live, the place of “the low use segment.”

4.

I hover for weeks after, afraid
to touch her in our bedded nights,
afraid we will not survive
such fierce sun come to earth.

5.

But we do.