

# the HARLEQUIN

*Monica Youn*  
**Blueacre**

for Jane Hirshfield

Razor-edged  
swallows arc  
through the air

like grappling  
hooks cast  
by a sophisticated thief

into this jeweled  
landscape. So much  
beauty available

for use, the fields  
in lacquered panels,  
the poppies like satin

emblems of themselves.  
The bee-eaters, too,  
have their moments

of hieratic beauty –  
viewed from below  
their black-bordered

wings are self-  
consciously dramatic  
as a kohl-rimmed eye.

But, they decline to soar,  
or even to hover,  
fearing perhaps

the depredations  
of the ever-circling hawks.  
Instead, they fly

in earnest, urgent bursts,  
clamping their wings  
to their sides

between wingbeats,  
and bubbling over  
with little spurts of song.

The overall effect  
is comic – something  
like a flotilla

of steam-powered  
parasols, and  
the bee-eaters

are chuckling, too,  
wearing their dime-  
store bandit masks.

They perch companionably  
on the telephone wires –  
each having skewered

a round-bodied bee  
like a cocktail olive –  
fluffing out their necks

until they are all neck,  
nearly spherical,  
having chosen warmth

over elegance  
having chosen to stay  
close to their dry

burrows in the sandbank,  
only occasionally  
gesturing skywards

at the shelterless,  
the infinitely  
glamorous blue.

Thank you for reading! Find more at [www.theharlequin.org](http://www.theharlequin.org)

