Leila Chatti

Cootie Catcher

Lilac

Milkwhite

Storm

Sadness

Hour

Shadow

Blueblack

Dream

Wave

Golden

phantom

through the window,
spring

your hip in first light

say days
and days

of the moon knowing
what it knows

shatters
into diamonds

dream

changed

vanishes the trees

hour

you emerge from,

joy

joy

wave

joy

vanishes the trees

a seam

briefly

days

through the window,
spring

your hip in first light

say days
and days

of the moon knowing
what it knows

shatters
into diamonds

dream

changed

vanishes the trees

a seam

briefly
Instructions

- Cut along the outside line of the cootie catcher. You should have a square when you're finished.

- Flip your cootie catcher text-side down and fold each corner to the center of the paper, so that the color words now face you and are touching. You will be left with a smaller square: words (colors and nouns) on one side, and phrases on the other side.

- Flip your cootie catcher over again so that the color words are facing down and you are looking at the phrases. Fold each corner toward the center. You will be left with a smaller square with the nouns now facing you.

- Fold this square in half twice: first vertically, then unfold it, and then fold it again horizontally, to get it flexible.

- Put your fingers under the tabs (the color words) and gently push your fingers together. With your fingers inside, the cootie catcher should now resemble a flower, with the color words meeting in a point.

- To create your poem, pick (or have someone else pick!) a color. Write this down on a spare piece of paper. Then spell the color out, opening and closing the cootie catcher for each letter and alternating the direction each time (up and down/side to side). Once you finish spelling out the word, you should have it open to four nouns. Pick one, write it down on your paper, then spell out the word just as you did with the color. You’ll see four nouns again. Pick one, write that noun down on your paper, then open up the flap. Write that phrase down on your paper. You’ve got yourself a mini poem!

Visit poetrymagazine.org to find the digital version of this poem and the instructions to print or share.