

Ace Boggess

Breakfast at a Chain Restaurant

When the masks come down,
we still show jittery rabbit eyes,
observing all movement,
terrified of other patrons,
what they might do to us
with their ignorance,
though they, as we,
likely took the blood oath.

We focus on our menus, try—
the litany of sugar prayers
& farm-fresh whatnots
changed like everything else.

We order pancakes,
their miracle the wafer we need
for a second life we haven't earned.

Ace Boggess is author of six books of poetry, including *Escape Envy* (Brick Road Poetry Press, 2021) and *The Prisoners*. His writing has appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Harvard Review* and other journals. An ex-con, he lives in Charleston, West Virginia, where he writes and tries to stay out of trouble.