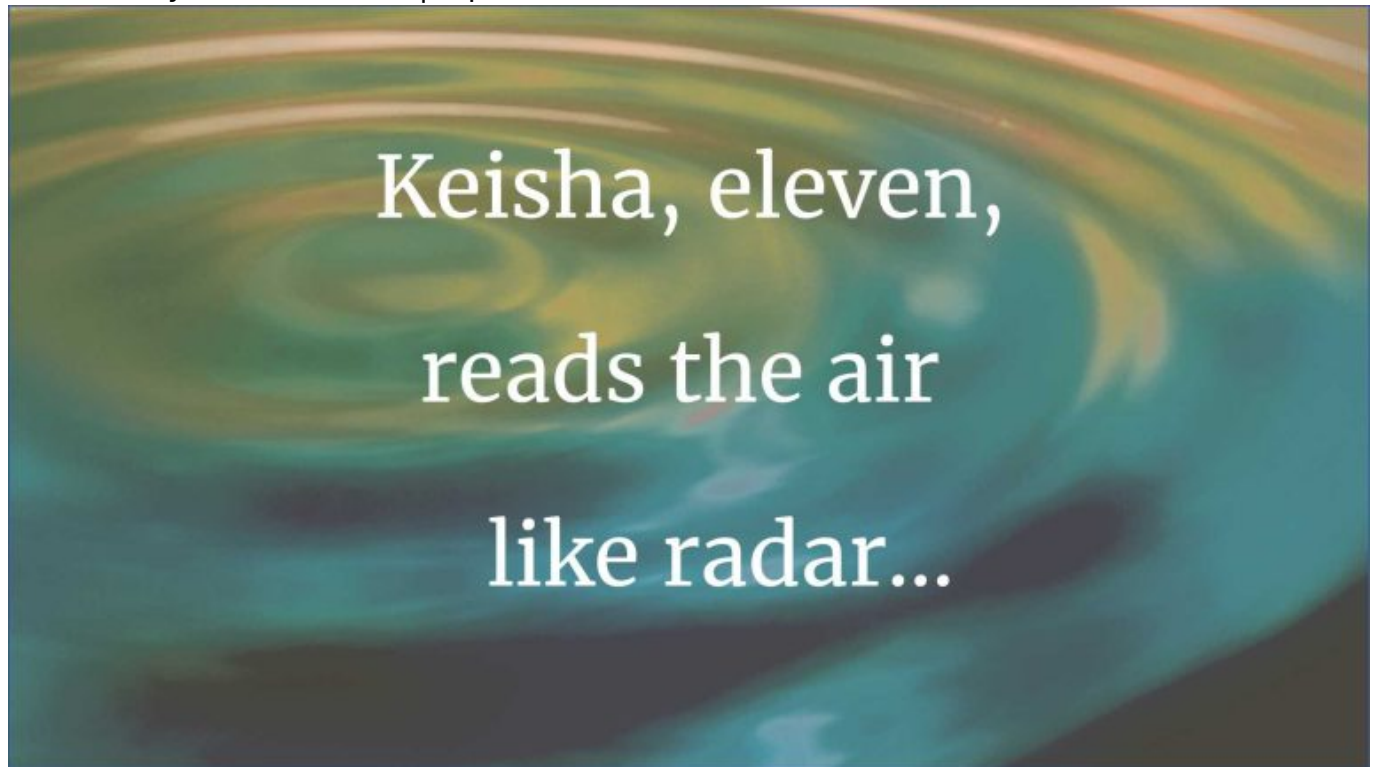


# Disaster North

Category: Poems

written by R.C. Blenis | April 17, 2026



Tuesday morning, Marcus holds his shoulders like a question mark. The intake nurse marks the calendar: Thursday—property destruction. She's never wrong.

This is what the body learns:  
to taste copper before the lockdown bell,  
to pack your things before anyone says transfer,  
to know which overnight staff will pretend  
the camera's broken, which therapist  
will cry in her car, who will quit by Christmas  
by the way they hold their clipboard in October.

Keisha, eleven, reads the air like radar—  
knows David's meds are off  
by the frequency of his blinking,  
calls out, "Mr. Tony, get ready,"  
thirty seconds before the new kid explodes.  
She learned this at home, mapping  
her mother's boyfriend's breathing,  
the exact pitch that meant  
take your brother next door, now.

The ones who survive here grow antennae  
in their sleep, feel tomorrow's violence  
coil in today, hear the group home closing

in the administrator's smile. Even the young ones  
know which promises are lies  
before the words finish forming.

In morning rounds we discuss therapeutic interventions.  
Marcus counts doorframes, exits, heartbeats.  
He knows what we won't admit:  
that mercy here depends on shift changes,  
funding cycles, which senator's daughter  
attempts suicide. His shoulders  
pull tighter, a compass needle  
finding its disaster north.

We call it hypervigilance,  
write it in their files like pathology.  
But Michael's grandmother knew the mill  
would close six months early:  
three generations trained to feel collapse  
before the brick loosens.

Thursday arrives. The window breaks clean.  
Marcus's fist finding the glass.

We document impulsive behavior.  
The nurse writes it, knowing  
this was prophecy: the future  
pulling backward through a child  
who learned to read time's tells,  
to feel the bruise forming  
before the blow lands.

She files the report. Stays late  
to hold ice to his knuckles,  
to not say what they both know:  
that seeing it coming  
is not the same as stopping it,  
that some futures arrive  
no matter how early the body knows.