

Flight of the Paper Cranes

TAMI HAALAND

It started as a sad day. Sometimes you get
more than you want. I settled in. We all
settled and expected nothing but haze.

Then the colored box arrived. A little
square of patterned sheets and cardboard.
I lifted the lid and admired the perfect corners.

Inside, stacks of color, rows of blue umbrellas,
tiny flowers, repetitive wide lines.
Golden shine or primary pigment.

My friend Jane took the first sheet. We watched her
fold and fold again until she had a red paper crane.
She put it in the center of the floor, then started another.

I lifted a sheet from the stack, blue like
Mediterranean doorways or deep sky. Every fold
she made, I copied. For her, this crane

sang purple. We set them on the floor.
The others joined in and watched our folds.
The cranes multiplied and colors quadrupled.

Some kind of resonance emerged. Not jittery
but joyful. That's all it was. The word vibrant
described what happened in our cells

and in the ascending pile of cranes. We didn't stop.
It became our work. We gave cranes to our friends,
to people who only saw gray, to our families.

We planned ways we could get them further out.
We mailed a box of bright cranes to the mayor,
and news people came with their cameras.

They asked why we did this. We said
we're solving it. Watch, we said, *you'll see.*