The Heron

By Katharine Covino-Poutasse

From the middle of the pond, we spied the heron.
Hunched like a monk in the soft light, awkward and silent;
gaiting with backwards knees and a glinting, lethal beak.

Gliding through ropes of larva-spotted water lilies,
we pressed through warm, shallow water.
With paddles raised and silent and dripping,
we crept ever closer to his inlet home.

He felt us near.

We held our breath.

Edging in, ignoring his stick-stepped retreat,
we watched him shake his lithe, serpentine neck.

Then, planting his long, taloned toes,
he exploded into a powerful fan of dusky purple flight –
forced by our curious intrusion
to find peace elsewhere.