

## **down south**

you don't slip into the south,  
no—you tumble in head  
first, catch your ankle  
against gnarled roots,  
crash through brambles  
so sharp they rip through you,  
land in creek water  
cold enough to shiver  
your bones clean in two.  
quivering there in  
shameless nakedness,  
you wonder why  
humanity stayed here  
with the maggots, boars,  
moss the color of a drowned  
girl's hair. you wonder  
why they ever claimed this  
wild, sticky land for their own—  
and then the song  
reaches your ears,  
low and sweet like hummingbirds.  
you gather yourself and follow,  
not knowing once you start  
heading south, there's nowhere else  
worth going but down.

## **Satan on a Saturday Night**

On Saturday nights  
Satan settles into his La-Z-Boy,  
props up his hooves, and flips on  
his television. Sometimes,  
while he waits for his shows  
he'll suffer through the infomercials,  
but most of the time he scans  
all 666 channels, one by one,  
catching glimpses of corpses,  
mine fields, distended bellies.  
He chuckles to himself and wonders  
how he still has a job when  
humanity has become so  
skilled at tormenting themselves.  
He shrugs and supposes  
they've learned from the best.

## Lot's Wife

I would imagine my husband  
struggled to resist  
returning for me, his salt  
wife—I expect he cringed  
at the thought of my body  
scattering across the sand,  
remembering the taste of my skin  
on his tongue, the softness  
beneath his hands—  
waste, such a waste.  
Salt doesn't come cheap.

## **The Paste-Eater**

Across from me,  
a girl worms her finger  
deep inside a glue bottle  
clamped tightly between her knees,  
brings a milky lump  
to her lips and gulps it down.

I cringe when she  
offers me some,  
a devilish grin stretched  
across her sticky mouth,  
She eats until her finger  
scrapes the bottom.

Sixteen years later  
the joke's on me.  
If I could have known  
how desperately  
I would need held together,  
I'd have drank the bottle dry.

## Another Persephone Poem

Listen, ladies—  
speculate all you want.  
When my husband whisked me away  
I screamed, hollered  
begged for mercy.

That's how love works sometimes.  
You struggle against it  
even when it knocks gently,  
leaves flowers long-since  
wilted at your door—an honest effort.

Believe it or not, he wasn't rough.  
If anything, living in the underworld  
makes you smooth and pale  
like the river stones I gathered with nymphs,  
my mother's callused hand on my neck.

One day, I stopped hollering,  
looked around me and realized  
fields can be prisons and mothers  
jailers, so I split that pomegranate  
wide open and sucked hard,

stained my hands and lips  
red for release, for resistance—  
let me tell you,  
I never felt so free as when  
I saw him smile for the first time.