

Nicholas Street Nocturne

*If not for this road,
nothing, Quicksand.*

—Lisa Fay Coutley

The usual powerline and rooftop cadence, burned
leaves stubborn on the trees, cluttering

gutters and lungs, mums smug in neighbor's garden
beds. You bought this room from a real

estate attorney who filled her floors with zebra skins,
let the roof leak and rats do their writhing.

There's a furnace tilted sideways in the half-attic
wheezing out heat. A billionaire's thousand

tiny satellites wink in the sky like shitty stars
so everyone in the world can bend a head

to the new pantheon. On the copper mantle, the ashes
of a green-eyed girl tsk at your indulgence.

Muse, patroness, subject, first reader, longest lover.
Laid low with her sharp-elbowed atheism.

You mean to sell the house, stop collecting books
to ignore, but then her scent will be lonely.

Six months gone and you haven't washed the sheets.
Her pillow still scorches the hominid in you.

You always thought she'd be the one left to scatter
your atoms. Not so. Best book a flight

to a quiet volcano and throw her in. Slope cleanly away.