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The Patient Saint

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FRANCES MCCUE

The Patient Saint

I know I have a body.
In this bone tangle, heart
wrung from the dropped
hearth of ribs, caught in
fireworn wrangles of ash
brought back. No Eve
am I, just flesh sent
a long way, intact.

From inside, my body caves
to wrapped marrow—
joint and splint. What
place of rich winds,
spin and flinch
of blood-culled gutterways
brings this desert—
skull, mites like
lichened fossils? A mote's
slow drop into a river
bile and brine,
twined to rib and bone?

Cold outside, my cage
fires within though
I'm slow to fist,
quick in blood gone thin.
I'm counting: white, red, white.
Fringe dust and spores,
washed edges of a ravine
dropping nonetheless
into the sea. Silt, slough
the residue of salts
or some other. Wither.