Judah

Josephine Kelly

I am a childless mother
who teaches teenage boys tenderness.
I lose them in malls
and to life sentences.

I shop online for a skeleton key.
I repeat their names until
I find one that will unlatch my fear.

We play out stale loops with concrete checkers.
the games always end with a draw
until I meet Judah.
He is hungry for the moon
and ultraviolet hues.

We look past the expanding chicken wire.
We clasp the air between our fingerpads
as we cradle nuance,
reimagine utopia
and recycle burnt narratives.

He says this place is a perfect purgatory.
That we are smashed between His gates
and the fallen angel's reluctant home.

I say we are orphaned as we speak silently with god.
He lives in rivers lined with sempervirens.

We find presence shaped like flexed feet.
Headstands tethered to the purpose of our expiration.

Judah tells me to write down his name.
I fold it like origami and stitch it in my collar
next to our familiar and distant kin.