

Persephone as Black Son

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James Hearst Poetry Prize

DERICK EBERT

Persephone as Black Son

You wish you could follow me everywhere
don't you? I used to stand in your room, in your shoes
and prance. Some boys will be boys, differently.

Now I have earned the floorboards respect
they won't snitch but slumber when I glide
smoothly on their backs, like wax I race

from the top step, spilling to the door, then
outside. I carry night on my head like a black hat
mother says, not too late please

I'm her only boy to come home before the dark
buries another sun. If she calls and no response
across valleys and hills, through cities she will storm

to find me full of thunderous laughter. What did you think?
See the ground cackles as well, then you blink and
it's winter.

REBECCA FOUST

Overnight a Thicket

has sprung up, a goldfield tangle
of new grass, tidy tips, poppies,
lupine, fiddleneck, miner's lettuce,
wild mustard, and shooting star
that really looks like a shooting star
or its cartoon version in neon
magenta and plum, also owl's clover
and of course the forget-me-nots

that remind me of the last days
of carrying my child, heavy and swaying
my hips while I walked, pollen
dusting my thighs; each bloom
a tiny planetary colony starched into orbit
about a yellow sun—five pale blue dots
like the earth seen from Voyager 1—
fragile as a baby's fontanel
and smaller than the pupil of my eye
repeated a million blue times.

The roadside gutters are thronged
with new life, cool green skeined through
with wildflowers; beauty everywhere
in this Marin spring drenched in rain
ending a decade of drought, and
eleven kids killed today, strangled
by Sarin in a rebel-held Syrian town.