



Naugatuck River Review

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The Devil She'd Say

I gave up religion long ago
thanks to my speak-in-tongues mother,
all tendon and teeth, jabbing me

with sermons, her silhouette
slipping every door,
tumbling me ass over ashes.

I swore I'd gussy up, brave city life
when I came of age, the heat
of my heartbeats goosebumping
a surly furbish to my skin.

Mama'd laugh herself blue-faced,
clap my cheeks red,
her mouth a howl and blizzard,

her sass a scat of alley cats,
all tits and elbows,
a growling thrash of scratches.

Even dismay can zing
when aligned with comeuppance.
When I left, I left in the night,
my wings torn from her back.

This was years before her body
would clam shut, all the scouring off
of predicament and the fervor of washing
our past down the drain.

Last days, I cooed to her in warbles
wrangled back to a voice fraught
from ache, heaven heaving
its ponderous prolapse of promises.