

MARCUS JACKSON

Faint Light in Ice

How long now have I been imagining
my decisions somehow becoming
as swift as three new nuns carrying
a carefully repainted Christ statue

through a snowy, morning courtyard?
My mother, who had been schooled by nuns,
ate wonderful drugs for a whole summer
out west, and some of those nights for her

must've quickly changed from waves
of velvet to ballets of blades.
On a fourth-grade field trip, our teachers
dragged us to a matinee at the city symphony,

and almost none of us children could keep
from whispering vulgarities, hoping to veil
our astonishment at the concert hall's scale
and at the players' sacredness.

Quite a number of those children
I whispered with have since been convicted,
entrapped, or released altogether
from the songs and the silences of this life,

and tonight I'm ripping the red cellophane
which necks a bottle of serviceable bourbon—
the ice in the glass capturing some
of the room's faint light and making it

look, for a while, unhaunted and young.

Salud

I wish you the lenient fulfillment
of a night parking lot, nearly carless

and looking for a moment like the inside
of some mythic lung (paused and treasuring

its current intake of January air).
Certainly, the lot will soon resume

its actual, menial identity, and you,
beautiful reader, will feel your mind

reassigning a percentage of its electricity
to the recurring weather that is your most

recent worry. Me? Every evening—
except those that deliver me some new

bafflement—I'll be at a bar whose décor
and patrons praise the rejection

of the formalities forced upon us when
we were hungry, shaken children.