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Summar West

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FIRST CHURCH OF THE RUDE AWAKENING

Summar West

I went down to the first church
Of the rude awakening today
Where they told me if I wanted to join
I'd have to stand in line.
I took a place behind the man in drag,
Heels tapping, skirt moving within the breeze,
A wide red belt that looked like her smile
That said, "Honey, I know."
She took my hand as we stood,
Her nails longer, more manicured,
Breasts larger, but no lonelier.
She twirled an unhooked pocket watch
Like a story turning in an unexpected direction.

In front of us, a man in uniform with a
Dove tattooed on the back of his neck.
Ahead of him a mother of three
With a bruise on each child.

All of us in a long line of patience.
We sag like an old woman, hold ourselves and sigh.
What we want is to be inside
Away from whatever has kept us
From our better selves.
The pocket watch ticks, the gun goes off,
The children close their eyes.
I roll around a pocketful of rocks
One for each woman that had me
High or sweet or cold.

We dig our heels in the dirt,
Draw lines of doubt.
A stranger behind us yells,
Are we welcome in there or what?

The light fades and cool stars wear us down.
A small fire begins from a bottle of whiskey,
A lotto ticket, and a cigarette butt.
On and on all night we watch it burn
As we toss our secrets into acceptance.

At dawn the door opens and we awaken.
No one's naked, no one's perfect.
Hallowed bodies just the same.

At last, we walk.
Emptied, we enter.