

## Bad Omens

(inspired by *A Step Away from Them*, Frank O'Hara)

The sidewalk is wet in a way that floats  
up, so you feel clung to, like a hungry  
toddler to his mother's thigh – desperate,  
postpartum. Yellow and brown shades of dog  
shit smear the ground. You avoid them sharply,  
like seeing Andrew coming toward you,  
who you almost slept with, before he kicked you  
out when you sweetly asked to be choked.

## Puddles

you step deliberately into, hoping  
to sink toward another destination.  
Ahead, you spot clumped fur by the curb.  
It's a dead mouse. All dead animals  
make you hold your breath, stop you for a time.  
A man brisks by, eyeballing. You wonder if  
your hair's turned white, and why the little  
bastard chose to leave his hole and die in  
plain sight. You finally get by him, moving  
like a character in a scratched DVD.

A panel in the concrete reads,

"Daddy," carved before it dried, probably by

someone who'd never done bad before.

It brings to mind another embarrassing

sexual encounter and you think, *Why*

*do I have so many of these?* and, *I thought*

*guys loved being called that...* It occurs

to you now that maybe he had a daughter.

It wouldn't be unlikely, given your taste.

On the next block another panel reads,

"Forgive," and a fat worm writhes in the etching

of the i. You don't like being bossed around.

You keep walking where you know you shouldn't,

stripping your coat off like a flayed bear,

trying to soak in anything. The drops

just drip and roll off, a form of foreign

torture. Your feet ache, toes like hot coals,

and you realize that if you ever get home,

no one will be there waiting with fingers

ready to smooth your fire to submission.