

Drum

The ones I miss the most I rolled by hand,
packed with moss and damp earth. The paper
crackled quietly between my fingers
as I packed down all those fields, the leaves
of Kentucky and Virginia. The moment
it turned to chocolate gravel in the floor
of my throat, everything became

easy: lying in bed with our twin coils
of smoke rising in the streetlight,
or standing in the shower with one
dry hand, or driving on a winter morning,
one hand on the wheel, the other tipping
the cigarette out the window. I remember

being fifteen, and holding one out a window
as the car charged down the freeway,
and marveling at the rain of sparks
as if this were some sort of bona fide magic,
a true slice of the mysterious held between my fingers
and drawn into my body, where it might grow.

The last one was on a bench in early spring,
forgettable except for being the last, its smell
on my hands rich as the scent of a woman's hair.
In bed that night, I mourned it, fingers to my face
as it faded away. Goodbye my slightly deadly,
goodbye my nearly precious—

PRESTON MARK STONE