**Faith**

Brittany Mishra

He prayed lying down

with his quiet smoke;

and folded prayers

into his wrinkles.

At the bottom

of his coffee mug, he kept

grounds divined into futures,

none of which were his.

They were mine,

brown bitter symbols;

he would swish them

like rose petals in water.

He taught me how to pray

with my fingers and throat,

how to sing away anything.

So I prayed lying down, too,

into the crooked shade of night,

sent my prayers high up

into the clouded stars.

I cracked any measure of faith

like an egg onto the moon

and set its dial to high;

cooked it into charcoal

and dust, burned it into

something bitter he could taste.

I wanted to make faith

into something I could rub

rough between my fingers

just like when he rolled

tobacco between paper.

I wanted it to brand my insides

just as smoke tarred his lungs.

But that one morning,

he smudged his coffee mug

with his desperate soot,

while he smoked lying down.

I tried to collect his ash

in a tray, tidy it up, like faith I tried

to pick it up, tried to make it stay,

but just like him, it slipped away.