**Carapace**

Julie Benesh

In the almost spring

as the white sky

tries to rain

Lana is afraid

of that empty Shell station

by the old highway exit,

like the cemetery at the end

of our block                 its spirits,

yet fears no living exoskeleton,

ushering pests to safe new homes:

compassionate cockroach concierge,

whereas I murder by proxy with shrink-

wrapped, pre-shelled lobster meat

to throw on a charcoal grill

and consume in an act

of transubstantiation.

She does not yet know that Earth

is a graveyard.

It's all recycling, for better or worse:

the wages of life are shells;

the first currency; shells

hide, protect, outlast

their host. Fossils

make the world

go around; fossils

fossils, the whole

way down.

That electric car billionaire plans

to abandon this space station:

Are we running out or moving on?

Lana believes in reincarnation; together

we ponder the improbable past: ghosts

of men in uniform, names squiggle-stitched

above their pockets, wiping windshields clean.