

AFTER

by Despy Boutris

This morning, before sunrise, I walked  
along the road, passing

all the boarded-up buildings, the undressed  
trees, the puddled street corners dark

as your eyes the first time we spent  
in my bed—how, in that blue hour

before daylight, we awoke to the moon  
hanging from the sky, almost full.

That morning, we got caught in the rain,  
saw dozens of earthworms scattered

over the sidewalk, searching for dry land.  
You side-stepped around one, mused

about your childhood spent fishing  
with family at the local lake, the memory

of your father telling you that—if cut—  
worms can replace their lost parts.

Back then, you used to brush your lips  
across my hand and we tangled our legs

in sleep. Back then, I didn't need  
any rebuilding, didn't feel close to drowning

in this longing, didn't ache  
to be severed, to grow back

into something you never touched.