

Brittany Ray Crowell

derelict city of our  
origin

1 your tongue was my  
tongue stacking towers  
over shinar probing the  
city of god—

2 *they* troubled the mortar  
between *us*

3 we carved our  
names into sky

4 your name fell from my  
mouth and scattered

5 all the ways i used to  
worship you

6 we have no words for  
now

## NOTES ON YOUR ABSENCE

i saged the house when you left  
turns out memories aren't immune  
to ash

i could ask why and other  
questions like what is the  
sound of bruising—

your blue black face kneaded

under god's sore thumbs waiting to  
be made anew

what i mean to say is that i'm  
sorry mama says she's gotta  
have a life too

she can't meld a man she loves from  
his own silt can't hush a small hive of  
noise swarming

the snow globe of your jail cell  
can't release all the things you  
imagine

you see from being  
real your mind is  
strong

and more brutal than the two  
hands you never knew could  
kill

by raising a man up to  
light to see through  
him