

## Escaping St. Peters, Indiana

Rachel Back

I buried myself in the cold asphalt street.  
I trapped myself in the earth between  
life and death. I was a stake pulled  
from the hard garden ground, splintering  
in half when the earth refused to give.

From my grave, I watched two trees  
stretching, reaching desperately  
for the other with branches too short,  
hacked away by jagged chainsaw teeth.  
Their separation mocked by those who hewed  
their limbs from their body. Their roots  
are left burrowed deep on either side of Blue Creek.

A portal to the afterlife opened  
in their reflection with a whispered  
promise, a gateway to freedom,  
where I am no longer torn between life  
and death with part of my soul cleaved  
from my body. A winding road opens  
in front of me leading the way out

of town to a city where hands can cross  
the divide and caress the face of their lover  
without the fear of being sawed in two.  
St. Peters had become my prison,  
Blue Creek my cell block, and if I remained  
I would serve a life sentence buried between  
the two trees, the lovers reaching  
but never catching the other.