

## SMOKE BREAK

—after Megan Fernandes

No, I like that you smell like cigarettes. It gives  
me something to work with. We have  
all the time in the world, only you might have  
less of it. Less could be more if lesser gods  
get involved, you know the ones, all jealous  
and petty and tending their domain over  
niche bureaus of being alive: the god of  
taxes, the god of pretzel thins, the demigods  
of demitasse shots and Google Maps. No,  
I like that you trail off mid-sentence,  
lost in your own haze. I find the acoustic covers  
blaring from your laptop charming,  
mostly. You apologize for coughing  
and coughing again. You continue  
to hack, all that air smacking out  
your cage, all that life leaving you  
and wafting past my face. No, I like your bad  
breath. I miss it even when it's here. I come  
up with words for you that can't touch who  
you really are, probably because I don't know  
and you won't tell me, goddammit.  
I'll stand outside while you smoke again,  
and stand outside while you smoke again,  
and stand outside while you walk back inside  
for what will always feel like the last time.  
You know, my sweet boy with the goatee smile,  
we don't actually know who will die first,  
and isn't that just a scam?