

"Joliet," she says, "is the darkest part of a man"
It's angry and slick
Into her letters writes
through herself each time
she thinks of him

Trips her way down south
into mystery's mouth
and he follows her there
It's what she doesn't say
that makes you want to stay
and try to comfort her

I talked to the cousins of people who knew you
I asked them the questions they expected to hear
Like maybe a killing went down in your town
Maybe it's the prison
or the birth of barbed wire

"Joliet," she says, "is the darkest part of a man"
It's shaped like liberty's bell
cracked and common law
and stretched out over its flaws
like an ink-less well

The hanging judge in town
records her comments down
she saves the crowd the truth -
and deals with it herself
Fills that hollow well
with nothing left to prove

I talked to mountains and streams that pushed through there
I talked to the trees that had no fruit to bear
to the colorless people that sat there
beneath her
curled up, stared

I talked to the cousins of people who knew you
I asked them the questions they expected to hear
Like maybe a killing went down in your town
Maybe it's the prison
or the birth of barbed wire

Joliet