

Tuning Your Mandolin
By James Nowak

Already, a gate of mist
is folding itself around you:
a rib-work to cage the storm,
a house from which to conjure.

Your eyes shut, your ear
pressed to a filament of silence,
you wait and remain still
as to render yourself
recognizable to crevices in the rock face.

Negotiating a balance,
you set pearls on scale dishes
before feeding a few to the pathway.
You remember: Hansel
and his breadcrumbs
incubating in the hedgerow.

Then, like a dove into a dark hat
you vanish
and become The Bat Queen
listening for shadows,
mist condensing,
a flower on the sleeve of Night.

If you return,
the mist around you
will settle into a small pool,
and you will drop your song
like a penny,
making ripples of your own reflection.