Florida Snow

The Everglades are burning. I'm fifteen.
I open the window, knock out the screen,

and crawl up the tiles to the apex of the roof.
Overhead the black clouds march on hooves

from the sunset to the ocean. It's rare for the wind
to carry the sugar burns in this direction.

I assume the purpose of the fires is to make
the sugar sweeter, but besides covering the state

in smoke, all they do is make the harvest cheaper.
Some men spent a fortune to drain the river,

but the cost was all up front. The stalks get so dry, sometimes a piece of lightning starts the fire for them.

What's left behind can't help becoming tinder.
I think the land will tire of not being water soon.

Tonight the air is cold and smells like winter.
Ashes fall around me like pieces of the moon.

A Map of Florida

Soggy cigarette, half-smoked,
dropped in the toilet. A once
good limb broken, discolored, the cast
cut off early so
the arm hangs but doesn't bend. A marlin,
all thousand pounds of it,
feeling a hook in its mouth the size
of a walnut, jumping
not to free itself, but to display its body
to the sun—that smaller, less
spectacular animal nailed to the sky's edge.
A shovel. A sinkhole. A head
bowing before a shrine. A cotton
sleeve, crusted in one
spot where a finger picked a scab
and the blood ran then clotted.
An anchor with a chain too short to reach
the bottom. A wick
ignited and burning. A wrong turn.
An open tomb. A stain
where the water found a break in the roof
and split the wallpaper
like a flower opening its petals.
A loaf of bread collapsing
in the oven. The skeleton of
a lizard arrested sideways
in the dirt. A flag torn off its pole,
swallowed by a puddle.
A rocket exploding after takeoff
becoming a kernel
of shrapnel, an eye made of fire.
A wave falling in the same place
over and over. The end
disguised as a beginning.

Self-Portrait as the "i" in Florida

Pick up a habit. Drop it from the sky.
Wherever it lands, call me by that name.
My sadness comes in waves. I hang it out to dry.

My head floats, neckless, above the tide.
Ocean, puddle, pool—down here it's all the same.
To the shopping carts I stole: I'm not sure why.

Where am I from? Where Channel 10 arrives.
If there's a body, someone must be blamed
but if the cemetery's empty, nobody has died.

The truth is nothing but a well-regarded lie.
You can have my reputation. Leave me my fame.
To get to heaven, a sinner threads the needle's eye.

To get to Florida, he turns the key and drives.
If the road had intentions, it wouldn't need to be paved.
We saved the world, but the legislation died.

That I can see myself is what the mirror implies
but if that were true, I wouldn't need a name.
Could I have picked a more beautiful place to die?
Is that a shuttle blowing up, or just the evening sky?

Dean's Gold

2355 NE 163rd Street

At some point near the end of my first marriage, my wedding band snapped on the underside, a clean line all the way through, a metaphor so on the nose it was embarrassing even to joke about.

After the divorce, I put the broken ring in the center console of my car with the intention of selling it to a jeweler, but a year later it was still there when, on the way to the mall, Christina went looking for a piece of gum.

"Why don't you sell this?" she said, turning the ring over in her fingers, inspecting the fracture, but I told her I didn't know where to go, or once there, how much to ask for it.

"Why don't you go into that place right now and sell it?"

"What place?"

"Dean's Gold."

She pointed to a squat concrete building across the street, and I had to tell her that Dean's Gold is not a jeweler but a strip club, a moment that made me feel as much like a Miamian as I've ever felt.

Eventually, I did get rid of the ring, although I can't remember if I sold it or threw it out. I could ask Christina. She would remember, but I like it better this way: the ring floating in the ether of possibility like Schrödinger's cat, all at once melted down; trapped inside a landfill; sitting at the bottom of a canal; and repaired and resting at the base of someone else's finger, his hand holding another hand, whatever energy I ruptured in the ring restored by a new and more enduring love.

And maybe that guy's name is Dean. Maybe that's Dean's gold now.

Ode to Humidity

What am I if not what happens
when I try to run away?

Water falls out of me like
an opinion. I'm like a screen
door banging between two rivers.

Dear air, what's inside me
you're so desperate to take?

I put on the Atlantic like a sweater.
My head bobs on the surface
of a lake I'm named after.

Where do I belong?
My head asks. My body
exasperated, answers.