A man once told me sweetness
was the highest quality a woman
could own then put my name
down as Trouble in his phone.

And here I’ve gone
and said too much already,

for this is the country of fat
threading through muscle,

the land that bleeds corn syrup
and brown rivers that flow

in directions I can never

This is how you keep
a story from being told—

mothers teach daughters
what knowledge they write

in bloodlines and what they must
trace into silt or wet snow,

each letter erasing itself as soon
as it’s exposed. I have learned
that sweetness is love
thrown back in my face.

I have spread a map across
my knees and dreamt of all

the places I could flee—
the better states (not many

after all) with better laws
(my body still not my body

wherever the corn oil sun
rises and falls) and then I saw

a picture of myself as if
from afar listening again

to your endless white boy
search for God—oh, there’s

the God in your weekly
Poker game, God in your

grandfather’s barn, God
in your goddamn manifesto

on human consciousness,
God in your marriage
to a much younger girl
   who believes you’ve hung

the moon, and there’s God
   in your painted bedroom,

God in the bleakest heart
   of your coldest Midwestern

woods—where any woman
   would be a fool to go alone—

the God who has been there
   for you all along, who was

made to look like you,
   who never wanted me.

They tell me, Trouble,
    let down your hair. Use it to hide

your eyes. Tell me how,
   then, do I still see shame

as it courses through
   the aching silence of lineage,

this rusted river that stains
   its color on my hands?