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Sprawl City Coroner

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Sprawl City Coroner

Christian Coleman

Andrea Saunders Gereighty / Academy of American Poets Award 3rd Place

On the mangled cherry trees bending in his front yard,
bloated and swollen, the maggots eat
like kings. The bodies swing from low branches
to be plucked by the Doctor. He paints their shadows
on the ground with black tar so the bodies know
where they have been. He keeps sticks

sharpened on both ends.

What they were the city has taken
as burnt offerings. The corpses of the unclaimed, stacked
like firewood on pyres. The Doctor makes
smoke signals of the dead. Gods
come when he calls