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Some Women I Used to Take to the Jail

by Mike Carson

“When I was imprisoned and you visited me. . .”
—Jesus

She has to beg a ride and leave her kid
out on the walk. She’s heavy-set, skin pocked,
hair slick. Her smile can’t quite untwist her frown.

She waits to get a four-inch square of glass,
a muffled wire-mesh mouthpiece under it,
part of his face, her mouth or ear up close.

She listens to this one she didn’t know
until he was encaged say *sweetheart, baby*,
whatever it will take to get a buck.

She takes me where I didn’t want to go,
their voices trickling through the boiler plate,
his crooked body on the other side.

She’ll have more bruises still if he gets out.
I have not thought of any out for her.
She holds me to the words where God begins.

