

Excerpts from *Southern Edge: three stories in verse*

***From The Lighthouse Keeper's Wife***

XXIX

From the light tower, the kero drums  
performing their daily cycle  
of expansion and contraction,  
toll dully.

She knows the smell of kerosene  
as well as she knows  
her own distilled essence,  
the scent of her daughter's hair,  
the keeper's salty presence.

Kerosene smudges everything  
with its hazy-blue skin,  
is the lighthouse's other tenant,  
always present, never seen,  
a bitter layer on the lips  
after she's kissed her husband's hand.

Remembering the children's dog  
barking until its voice was gone,  
she wonders how long she could scream  
before she would not make another sound.