

The Guardian at the Gated Tower

(a rondeau redoublé)

Sly serpent, slither far away from here—
You fled this realm and spurned His cosmic creed.
If you incite unrest, I'll commandeer
The cards that planted insurrection's seed.

So tell me—did desertion's cost exceed
Emancipation's benefit? I hear
Your scaly form's reprisal for your deed,
Sly serpent. Slither far away from here—

You lack the temperament for seraph's tier,
Instead adopting augury and greed
For what can't be. You mustn't tell our sphere
You fled this realm and spurned His cosmic creed,

So go! Don't make me draw my sword, I plead—
Although now mortal adversaries, we're
Still kin. What's this—you bear a card? Concede
If you incite unrest, I'll commandeer

"The Tower" for our Throne. What tales appear
On here? These revelations can't mislead;
The vanquished spire portrayed is His. It's clear
The cards that planted insurrection's seed

Portend some truth. Let's flout what He's decreed
Beneath this stronghold's heavenly veneer.
I'll bid the Gate's obscuring bars recede
And let you in. And should our fortress veer,
Sly Serpent, slither here.

—Mindy Watson

leopard and cubs

aliens erase
brain cells of all in small town
now data storage

baobab at night
bioluminescent tails
dangle from thick boughs . . .
on seed pods and clustered leaves
rosettes in silhouette

—Denny E. Marshall

—Brittany Hause