Imagine striding the surface of a black hole
Cave quiet forest path
Soil dark as negative energy
Bird songs squawk in such a silence
Imagine the little girl and her grandfather
searching for patches of azure sky
clouds bobbing above tree canopy
green as a monotony interrupted
only by the occasional dainty flapping
of monarch or mourning cloak wings
the surprisingly graceful flight patterns
of chubby bumblebees taking off
and landing softly on Queen Anne’s lace

Prepare to be nauseated
because just around the bend
nature gets ugly
The girl always spies them first
Poison pancakes
Stacks and stacks of them
Pounds and pounds of them
Syrupy and sickeningly sweet
Sulfa yellow, fluorescent orange
Basidiomycota, phylum fungi, kingdom Fungi
Jammed, jagged, and jutting
from serene slate of tree bark
up and down and everywhere
Her grandfather doesn’t notice
the girl’s shallow breathing

Hardwoods, aren’t they supposed to be stronger and smarter?
But it wasn’t their choice, was it
They couldn’t run away, spit it out, brush it off
this fungus that hollowed their trunks
before breaking their skin
Even if the girl had a chainsaw
she was strong enough to lift
Even if she could shear off
every soft tissue mutation in sight
It is too late
Nothing underneath
No part of tree
Only fine talcum tumbling
through her fingers
covering over her feet