

Hawthorn

by Nettie Farris

A bird in the house augurs death, my grandmother always said . . . A small bird flew in through the window, circled three times over the bed; and, a day later, the woman was dead . . . (We referred to her as *senile*—My grandmother—Alzheimer's was not a word that we knew back then). However, I did not realize it bad luck to bring hawthorn into the house. It's so beautiful, in the spring, with those pearl-shaped buds, white tinged in pink, those jewels, branches and branches of them. Only good intentions I had, bringing them into the house, despite the thorns. But then the deaths began happening, one after one. Illness. Accident. Suicide. Dementia. So many of them. And nothing I could do, despite my good intentions. Despite anything. If only I had known. Fear death by water, warned Eliot, long before Virginia Woolf filled her pockets with stones, long after the drowning of Ophelia. Soft-spun blues atop cold still surfaces. He loves me. He loves me not. Madwomen. All of us.