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The Nephelium

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Jody Barnes

THE NEPHELIUM

The chain-link fence clattered
as they shoved him against it
a shiny black crow called once
then flew off over the roof top.
Hands, not much bigger
than his own, grabbed and pinched
and twisted until
his mouth fell open in pain.
They shoved in handfuls of twigs,
blossoms stripped
from the crab-apple tree.

“That’s his mom!”—
and they were gone
around the corner before I could get there.
He took my hand in his, eyes so dark
I couldn’t tell pupil from iris.
“Those guys are funny, mom.”
He searched my face—a pink petal,
translucent,
pasted to his lower lip.