

ORIGIN STORY

When I call you now, there's a new chasm: that couple-second overlap as you pause the show—

or *stop, Alexa*, and the silence makes room for us again—

Dad's cypress knobs for knees, the two of you prying oysters open, twinkle-lit from strung lights and his voice on the machine when you got home—

*(I guess we're just a couple of dancing fools)*—

Both of you so young in your forties, single atoms buzzing around a strange and listless center, which soon would fill: this small, slimed planet to orbit—

The hired Santa in the yard, the storms that yanked each pier of their planks like teeth, Shrek on VHS in the easter basket—

That clam shell slicing dad's sole open at Goose Creek—

I'm not saying *all for naught*—

For a while, the three of us: caught in the eye of the storm as the lights went out. Colliding like that tree that followed dad as he crossed the living room, crashing down in parallel, narrowly missing the house:

That's the shadow work, isn't it? Life is so rarely about being good. And loneliness like a beehive pushing impatient against the walls—

When I come home, I still expect to find you curled in my poster bed, your heavy breathing. Your breathing. Your breath—

Pressing forgiveness under the pillow like a tooth—