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What They Say is True: Your Other Senses Do Sharpen When You Only Have Darkness to Look Forward To

Courtney Hilden
University of New Orleans

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Courtney Hilden

I picked
out the coffin by smelling inside
each, worried that we were getting
something previously
occupied or a rental. Neither would
do for Mother, so I rejected the one that smelled
of petrol and potato sacs. I sang her favorite
hymns with the enthusiasm I generally save
for sand bagging. I decided
after the divorce I wanted to memorize

your snow crutched steps
that I can hear from my bed when you think
I won't know of your visits. The house feels it too:
her joints snap to attention. If you'd just shuffle
your feet across the carpet, she'd rev you up
for a doorknob shock.

Perhaps you visit me because I come to stare at your
home by holding out my right arm and counting
seven mailboxes. Don't clean up for me; it looks the same
as everything
now. You must notice the white salt
line halfway up my jeans, the soiled
sneakers. The ice underneath itches
for me to slip. Tell me if the night brims
like those cups of coffee that Sharon used
to serve us on our breaks,

but I know better: You're at the strip
mall parking lot, smoking
with the other boys, playing
Focus Tailgate or Camry Bar,

depending on what shift works close,
the perimeter decked out with bullet holes,
the crush in your van's fender unhealed.

One night you will circle my lawn and return
to your vehicle and find me feeling at the indent.
trying to measure my former body like a man
evaluating the growing ticks on his mother's
kitchen's door frame. It forms in my mind
like a child with Play-Doh, squishing into
shape. Were any of us ever
this small? Yes and no.