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At the Holiday Inn (Gereighty/Academy '23)

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At the Holiday Inn

Laurel and nandina make a nest
for the robin-egg hydrangeas we've stolen
from the parking lot of the Holiday Inn.

We shoved handfuls into plastic bags,
punctured with stems, and made our decisions,
based on an inheritance of redneck

and green thumb, generations of
"I'm fixin' it," terribly stubborn, "just leave me
alone and I'll do it," Bowdoin syndrome

that's been handed down and down (*yes,*
it's our rite of passage). Listen:
What would you have done

if someone forgot the entire funeral arrangement?
I can't take credit for it. My aunt recruited me
in the hotel lobby, and there were gardening shears

(Uncle?) in the floor of their car,
while we unraveled a slew of grocery bags
tucked in car doors and consoles.

We were off searching the dark,
"You know Mimi would have loved this!"
She laughed, as we crouched in the hotel's bushes,

cell phones scanning for roses, lantana,
shiny leaves of laurel found in the darkness.
"Cut here and here. Lower.

Between the branches." *The nodes and lengths of
stems are noted: the way they grow
back into themselves.* Devoted,

We snuck them back in,
upended the bag of cuttings into our sink,
to steep a foam brick in hard

water then pricked elliptical,
while she was deep in her role, directing
in a voice that sounded just like Mimi.

Metamorphosis. *That next layer of matriarchy
is motherlessness.* “Blue hydrangeas.
Right in the middle.” She drew three

in the air atop the laurel leaf ring,
circular shedding, sink sowed
with airy blue petals,