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CLOUDS

My father’s green Pontiac
carrying him north over the highway and gravel roads,
low horizon binding dark to day, and day
to all those foolscap sheets
in a vinyl suitcase on the backseat. Dreams, he knew,
could be better than the dreamer. Sure,
he abandoned the cause, yet he kept
writing and visiting his mother in the tent
by the nuisance grounds until he died in that hotel room.
Quick, I’m told, his burial.
*
In the spare room, photographs,
handwriting on the back, names
I don’t know. The light has shifted, bare branches
tubes of gold. Tubes of light, traveling towards the sky.
*
Dusk beyond the pine trees and
his mother’s expression, an impasse.
Then she cut off
her braids. Later, in poems,
phrases and words underlined,
his shock came to the surface. This was
1958 but already the sixties, wind-blown,
had found him.
After her funeral, moments returned
in brief flashes, here and there. He gathered these smallest parts of her
inside him. To cry might release them,
so he drank, a reverse river
of grief that kept her close.
*
Strange, how the wind can disperse
thought, lift monuments
of tenderness, buried in darkness.
Yet the submerged world
isn’t life, life is breath
and waking.
The Czech poet says, “I am here.”
I look at the vase

of white zinnias on my computer table.
The color white always makes me think
of my sister. Her urgency, its bright flame.
We were listening to
Joni Mitchell’s Both Sides Now, kids running in and out, walls
freshly painted blue. Closeness doesn’t require
the hush of night or deep talk. I used to
colour her hair like the sun in an autumn afternoon.
Today’s sky is grey and blue, why speak
to the dead? Let them return in dreams
if they must. This morning, go down to the river.
Touch the tree trunks and tell the clouds:
I see you.