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A chimney swift skims with its beak
then its body this merging of water
and light, leaves

a cloud of soot in the lake.

I ask dad why
I can't have candy. Why that boy
is brown. Why grass shivers in the wind,
why the wind moves but is bodiless. Dad, dad...

Scatter your rhythms in the bog,
young mud puppies. You!
Go tickle the beard of a jellyfish,
I don't have time for this—

Water stirs.
In everyone. In me.
In everyone in me. What happens
when the moth's wings shove its breath
against goldenrod.

Dad has a badge, a big silver badge,
heavy in my hand. I'd like to be dad,
dad and his badge and his gun, his gun,
his little silver bullets.

Towers collapsing in on themselves.
A little obelisk in a big cemetery.

Capillaries reach
toward touch. Limbs
sift through dreams. Flesh, flesh. This prison



of acanthus flutings. My father
the tree coaxed me back, loved me
as his roots love the dirt. To have
bread and breath keeps us tethered

to the whipping post. What are
these feelings from under my toenails. Why
does the dog speak with his tail.

For the first time I am disappointed in my father.

He came home
crying I didn't know he could cry,
dad, with his badge and his gun,

wearing a cloud of dust, dust
of fathers, the fathers that didn't come home.

So much dust even night
 could not wash him.