Necessary Light
Fargnoli, Patricia

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The night you were conceived
your father drove up Avon Mountain
and into the roadside rest
that looked over the little city,
its handful of scattered sparks.
I was eighteen and thin then
but the front seat of the 1956 Dodge
seemed cramped and dark,
the new diamond, I hadn’t known
how to refuse, trapping flecks of light.
Even then the blackness was thick
as a muck you could swim through.
Your father pushed me down
on the scratchy seat, not roughly
but as if staking a claim,
and his face rose like
a thin-shadowed moon above me.
My legs ached in those peculiar angles,
my head bumped against the door.
I know you want me to say I loved him
but I wanted only to belong—to anyone.
So I let it happen,
the way I let all of it happen—
the marriage, his drinking, the rage.
This is not to say I loved you any less—
only I was young and didn’t know yet
we can choose our lives.
It was dark in the car.
Such weight and pressure,
the wet earthy smell of night,
a slickness like glue.
And in a distant inviolate place,
as though it had nothing at all
to do with him, you were a spark
in silence catching.