My father’s voice now slept in a box, in a recording I made as a joke the time I visited him on the border. My stepmother was in on it and baited him to say silly things, though silly things were what my father liked to say when he stood over a ditch, looking for toads on a mosquito-infested afternoon. I was slightly jealous of my half sister, who had asked for this unusual pet. I had seen my father play soccer goalie to her penalty kicks all day and I thought how unfair it was that she got to have the beaten-down father, the father too tired to stray or say no.

I haven’t been able to listen to the recording since his death, and so his voice remains locked in a miniature cassette, much like his ashes remained in a small wooden box until the time came to toss the dust into that same ditch. I didn’t want to hear my father’s voice. What I wanted to recover instead was the image of my father as evening fell. How his body slowly darkened. How I loved him then, fading away from all of us standing around that time—his second wife, his daughter, the neighbors—and not only from me.