The Architecture of Fathers

I.

They move like haunted houses, which means they don’t move, but are moved inside. Each bump, every cough in their crawlspace is enough to collapse the roof. The roof hasn’t been around for years, not since their growth in the attic pushed it off. And at night they let the owls swoop in. Nurses. The hospital bed lowered so that their chest mirrors the sky—blackest tumor in every X-ray. The walls of their ribs reveal branches covered in snow. Mice crawl inside them, make the owls go lustful. But only they hear all this. Feel it, too. The wind coursing in rivulets down their arms, how it stings open the windows. When insects tire of light, they cover the faces of the fathers.

II.

When children fill a haunted house, it looks more silly than scary. The hills you see outside and the tapering clouds about to erupt with hail, the loneliness of being emptied, trees like drifters. Are you ever afraid the old leaves will stay inside you forever. Or that all this will leave, no more mice to find stiff on the kitchen floor. The storm that will be the attic’s last upheaval, filling it with an ice that melts down to the pit of your back, plants a stone, which will not grow.