Elegy

for David A. Van Landingham

Summer David. Coastal David. My David of the bag of weed in the garage. The greasy hair, the Myer's & OJ. David without a middle name, David of initials, the A., which, while on a small beach in Mexico—mother joked—stood for Arturo. David of the rolling r's, the hatred of California, David who stole his mother's car and spent a night in jail. Photographer of nude women not my mother. David of always running out of gas. My David of the river, god of oars, the raft its own country and I, princess of deer and their diseases on the shore. Awestruck David.

Of always mispronouncing Sartre. Sci-fi David, man with the smile like a slit in the tent. River otters fed from his hand, David of water creatures. Who showed me the recoiling of a sea anemone, slightest prodding. David of failed kidneys. Of affliction, midnight walker, gesturing out to the driveway, the ditch trail, waterfall gravid with rain. Please.

The moss-covered rocks. David, the unsteady gait.
David. The hawk flying down to the wrist. Bones visible through skin, my David. Of translucence. David untouched. I still don’t know what to do with his hands.