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Dad, You Know What?

You're an unfinished puzzle
to a daughter across the ocean, the years
mute, falling down between us like shadows.

You're a lost mouse in an open maze:
I came to America to see you crumple-up
one marriage after another.

You're the car with the keys locked inside,
because you stuck with waitering—
you quietly inapt, one-time
restaurateur.

You're the stench at the bottom of a plugged drain,
taking money from your wife,
your teenage daughter,
your septuagenarian mother
so you can take it easy, relax
wait tables part-time.

You're the wannabe cutter who threatens suicide
if you don't have my money in your hand.

You are dead to me.

Colette's Ghost

You know
a barista girl
long Athenian
eyebrows high
foolproof

eyes that
burn flimflam
possess rooms
corner thoughts

You know the one
clothed in filmy
stretchy black
You want her.

Let Time Flow Backwards

I dreamed of my first girlfriend
living in Philadelphia and I'm in SF,
house on glowing stilts standing
on a hill. Foggy sky then full of stars.

I'm calling her *When will we see each other?*
She says *Next weekend, we'll kick
the leaves while they're yellow gold
red maroon.*

I know people want
to undo the housing bubble
to take away 9/11
to undo the deficit.

But I miss her most of all.

Phonebook

I woke up this rainy morning & found--

delivered on the welcome
mat in a plastic orange bag--

a corners-wet phonebook. Standing
in my yellow bathrobe, coffeeless

I discarded it to a foyer corner
on top of a red dog leash.

Who uses phonebooks anyway?

Maybe old people forgotten,
turning brittle, fragile

like last week's flowers. The once
scarlet petal tips darker than

burgundy. There's still one
in my bedroom, she left

that bottle behind. I'm still
thanking her for it

in my gray, week old beard.
What did she call me?

Useless, outdated, washed-up.

Bar on the End

Long ebony bar
bartender wiping his way
mahogany tables
chair legs tipped with
bone.

Silver-haired man alone
on the end. You go
to him, orange tongues
flickering on the black,
brown tops. Piano playing
“Autumn Leaves,” he says,
“Come to hear my story?”
Eyes too light to be blue,
gray, closer to starlight,
electricity.

Now, dead soul, listen carefully,
even for the scratches of
his black suit, bent elbow,
cognac in his right hand.

Pointing up, “I know where
you’ve been. I’ve been higher
still. One day, we will go there
together. To the highest,
would you like that?”

Measure each word, now, each
thought
like placing fingers for playing.
He’ll put you down,
where he thinks
you belong until
he returns to my side
My first-born. The one
without form, full of fire
boundless.