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Weathered Wood

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Weathered Wood

You sit there in your rocking chair
and creak the floorboards back and forth.
Out in the heat of the front yard your voice
holds onto me. Don't you pick at my weeds,
you say, I like 'em just how they is.

Eight years ago today you took me
to the railroad crossing, drove the Chevy
across the track. The Rabun County Courthouse
vanished into the distance like this shack
will disappear in the dust billowing behind

the bus that will take me. Grandpa,
sometime in the next few years your chest
will cease its heaving, your hands turning
as grey as the weathered wood they grasp.
For a moment they'll seem as if carved

from the same wood, withered
skin wrinkled like the armrest
they've held onto for 35 years.
I will reach over and pry your fingers
from the dead wood, then slide into

my good pair of jeans and slip the photograph
of Mother and Father into the back pocket.
when Georgia Gillespie has given her condolences
I'll wait by the fence for the next bus.
But not before I've taken your chair out back

and thrown it into a pile of wood and crumbled papers
The *Clayton Tribune* will spark the splinters jotting
from its legs. I will stand there until the center
splits and falls into itself, and the embers, brittle,
break into tiny glowing ashes against the dirt.

Kelly Bondurant