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## The Death of the Girl You Were Before

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*The Death of the Girl You Were Before*

In the middle of a forest in Massachusetts,  
windows on the ceiling framing thin branches  
and an unraveling blanket of green, I cried  
at the thought of your innocent face.

My mentor asked, “Would your younger self  
be proud of who you are now?” and I looked  
at my hands. To me, a mission trip is about  
arms carrying, tongues sharing, not

hearts sinking to rest on your belly, an ache  
settling like a virus. My wrists begged to climb  
the trees you once lived in, to grip the branch  
you sat on when you told your best friend

that you’d rather be sisters. Your smile was  
frequent, your eyes bright. Mom said they  
were blue as a baby, then green, then  
turquoise. I wonder now, again and again, why

I couldn’t have stayed that girl. Why my eyes  
turned brown and uninviting. And this was before  
that party — before your head got heavy and your  
stomach full and you had to crawl into that

toddler’s bed because your friend refused to leave  
early. This was before that boy crawled in, his feet  
falling off the end, just like the covers. This was  
before he took your clothes and raped you.

I guess I forgot depression took my mother, my  
uncle, my sister, my brother. I guess I forgot that  
my brother wanted to die at thirteen. I guess I  
forgot that before Massachusetts, I dragged my

sister to the hospital by her hair, stuck my finger  
deep in her throat to try and get the pills out.

I guess I forgot that I've been cursed from the beginning. But you — you liked teaching your

dolls how to spell because it embarrassed you not to know. You caught frogs in the neighbor's backyard, never forgetting to say, "Hey Dale," when he came out, "I'm sorry, Dale," when his

daughter died. You told the teacher when the boys took your crayons. Who is she going to be, the girl I am now, now that you're dead? Who is she going to become, and will it be a happy ending?