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## The Sawmill

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## *The Sawmill*

When the sun came up  
sawdust rose into the breeze  
and remained in the air all day  
as it did in our eyes. But none of us  
drove to work the next day  
or for the rest of the week.  
The tin-roofed operation  
run by four men was quiet  
and those driving by only imagined  
our movements in the building's shadows.

By evening an orange glow  
burned down beneath the shrinking mound  
of charred slab wood behind the mill.  
Smoke rose in thin trails  
but smelled nothing like incense.  
When a car rushed through the valley  
and up the hill, its beams  
moved like a flashlight  
through an empty closet.

Around midnight  
a dog might have returned to the mill,  
nosing over hickory bark  
or scraps of yellow poplar,  
looking for a bone.  
He might have smelled something  
lifelike in the air,  
and if he had walked near the circular saw,  
sniffing the dampness  
on the stained, wooden floor,  
he would have lapped dried blood  
until his mouth was full of dust.

When I try to think of you  
and that morning,  
think of you doing anything,  
cursing, spitting tobacco, shoving boards,  
there is always the awful ring of that saw,  
your legs kicking at nothing,  
the drenched log sliding toward me.