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Elegy for a Moonshiner

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ELEGY FOR A MOONSHINER

What damage can a pool cue inflict
until it splinters and shards? What

story threads its way down a mountain
road until it slams into the trunk of a tree?

Somehow the name of the tree grows
dim until forgotten and a blank is all

that remains. His beard, the story goes,
was six presidential terms old. In grief,

one must rename the world and find
grace along the baseboards and cobwebs

of the house one's steps used to haunt.
In the end, it all comes down to a shelf

of empty jars and a brief glance out
the back window past the water pump

while you pretend to wash the dishes.