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Where it Starts

Ashley Hillard

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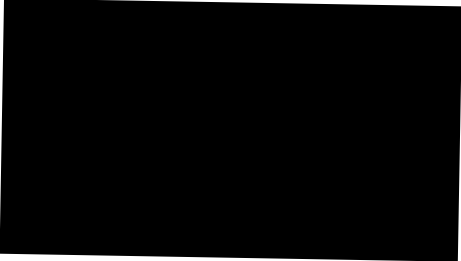
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WHERE IT STARTS

ASHLEY HILLARD



A chair bares creases, its deep
feet like a bathtub, beware
on a boat or a peel—
cantaloupe or the back of a wheel—
for it slopes and slopes,
only wood, hinged with steel.
Sticking out is a nail and all nails
on the feet of all mammals, scratching
another life in tree trunks,
on a path of rosemary is an arm
or a long liquid
or branches searching and reaching
my father, until he lays in it, rolls all about
in its mosses and pasturing movements,
where most types of ants dwell,
while way over head, the wind
howls my fathers home, smoke
from beneath woolen blankets.
A black bird catches in this
new current. How she sputters,
cough, she is falling, the wind
whistling through her feathers,
leaves. Father opening
his hands, lets her fall
into them, her wing in his hands,
aflutter, and he feels
for a minute her dying
breaths and beatings
of feather, the fighter, she speaks:
care for earthworms and smooth shells
peeled from beetle backs—their soundings,
their taste and nutrient are all we have left.