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Gwen Frostic

Dustin Hoffman

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GWEN FROSTIC
DUSTIN HOFFMAN

At seven years old, I rode
in my parents' white Bonneville
through the outskirts of Benzie County,
to the alcove stowed in a poplar row
where fifteen Heidelbergs stomped out
hundreds of linoleum prints—
scratches become fingerprints
of the world you noticed:
the lichen hum, whisper-thin
branches weaving a harvest moon,
possibilities of a toad

winking as you held your breath
in tree stands,
awaiting the rustling of the next blade
of grass to be sketched, etched, printed
one million times.
94 years and 394 days in Michigan,
surrounded by windows
and lichen song,
until your skin wrinkled into oak bark.

My big sister dragged me down the stairs,
past lifelike birds carved out of wood,
to meet the maker of my July wonder.
You were quiet and I was scared
of your wrinkly skin.
I petted your big, blond dog instead of looking.
You waited behind your desk, rich
with the scent of inkwells and pine needles,
while my sister rambled, never shy.
And there were Heidelbergs beneath
your soft eyes, strong resolve,
patient for me to come around.
You asked me my name and waited.