

Asymmetry

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In the park: a father watches his child roll
down a low, grassy hill. Young enough
for pigtails, she wears a yellow raincoat. Bright
against the grass, vivid as lemons in a grocery
display or those tulips that dare to bloom
on traffic partitions in cold cities
after the first thaw. The girl falls clumsily
at the top and I watch her look at him
unsure if she should cry or not,
if her pain was mimicked in his face.
Impassive, he picked her up as she cried
anyway, held her against him
the way certain men clutch tulips
to their chest to soften an apology.
I no longer have a father. Memory
of being small evades me: precious trinket,
a tulip grasped in a hand, I remember not.

Was I something else to my father—
not a tulip, but a lightning bolt striking

the grass, yellow flash streaking through
what he wanted of his life? The last time

I saw my father, he and my mother
were getting into their car to drive away

from me, across the state. The hills were dry,
yellow. He gripped the loose handle

above the car door, almost a wave,
but not. His face, thin-lipped. He was once

as important as the sun in my childhood,

his hand inside my yellow hair. All I have left
of him is that memory and now,

it whirls through me like a high wind wild
through a house, pulling the shades dark.

