

Calamity

An inebriated figure stumbles
and grasps the doorway,
open container sloshing
in his blithe hand.
The air vibrates;
bass pollutes the front yard
and mingles with the distant chatter
of eager underclassmen.

The keys are heavy in his hands
as he stabs the driver side door
four times, giggling;
he gains entry on five.
He taps blissfully on the wheel,
his calloused skin sliding over the leather,
fingers rough from summers spent
tending to his mother's garden.

The engine groans and rattles
and the car shudders,
much like a tractor
during a hay ride in October.
His size eleven shoe presses down
and the car lurches forward.
Streetlights flicker overhead,
glaring through the windshield.

Trees blur, a green canvas;
the road shifts with the clouds,
the moonlight casting everything
into its ivory shadow.
His eyes dart up,
admiring the stars
that pepper the sky,
like they do at his family's camp.

The lines partitioning the lanes blur;
he drifts to the left.
His eyelids flutter,
heavy from intoxication.
Headlights come into view—
spotlights on a stage
where the trees are the audience.
The silence is suffocating.

The impact expels
his lungs of air,
and the other car
of its driver.

Glass glistens on pavement—
diamonds tossed aside like waste.
His vision is painted red
as he stumbles out the door.
Each inhale tastes like copper
and he doubles over.
His chest heaves painfully
as he takes in the carnage before him.

The driver in the street,
like a reflection
in a fractured mirror,
a motionless portrait
on display.
Had he also tended
to his mother's
flower garden?

He tears his eyes away
and his fingers skitter
across his phone's screen.
He mumbles and rambles
to the operator.
"No, he's not breathing.
Yes, I'd been drinking."

He holds his head
in his hands and looks up,
the streetlights still
glaring at him.
The ringing in his ears
overwhelms him and he sits
among the wreckage waiting
to be bathed in red and blue.