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Emily

Emily the cat
sitting on a tractor beam
turns her calico head to face me.
She is nearly gone.
I cry for her as for my mother.

When my mother died
I asked my father what happens in a crematorium
picturing her in her sun yellow nightgown
lying silent, still,
flames reaching up
blue and fire brown.

My father took a coach-class flight
alone to Philadelphia
carrying a box wrapped in baker’s twine
my mother’s ashes
an angel food cake.

The lake place we rented
after mother was gone
had no-see-ums
that crawled through screens
and high-humidity
between bays and stands of pine.

Mother was long ago.
Emily was only recent,
her warm eyes regarding me
with directness,
curiosity,
a slow blink,

saying I trust you enough, Mr. Man,
to close my eyes
and open them again.

We keep her ashes
and her plaster paw print
on the book shelf in the bedroom.