

Apology: masculinity

Nathan Marquam

it hits my giggle with a shovel & churns the sound
into mud & gravel. it runs a thick hand down
my stomach & turns the mirror away, cracks open
my bones & sucks out the *please & thank you*.

when a man grabs me in the club, it is both
my ready fists
& my silence after. it cracks my tear ducts
like beer bottles,
lets them drip onto the floor. it says that I am
always
the shoulder & never the one embraced,
always the fire

& never the thing burning. it replaces my spine
with a steel rod, yanks back my hairline & burns
the skirts in the back of my closet. it inspects my cologne
for any hint of flower, insists I must only smell of tobacco

& burnt pinewood. it hacks into me like a
tree, makes angles

from what once was body. it scrapes the
birthname from

my tongue with a sawblade, leaves me to
choke on the blood

& I am a wasteland of jagged stumps, worth
more empty.