

REPATRIARCH

It was the evening I dug my
daughter's cat from its grave.

~

It was the evening police surrounded
the yellow house on the corner
for three hours.

~

It was the evening I returned
and returned and returned
to my daughter's vacant house,
and the last time left with its number,
and a lawnmower.

~

It was the May evening of scattered showers
and quilted indigo ribs languishing
westward to incandescence,
our weathered light stroking
the threshold, a final carload —
her household compliantly
compressed in small hand-
held hours, crowding back without design.

~

It was the evening so clearly divined
in the early first January of three:
Sunday predawn beige-bright ER's
railed bed where she clenched
her spasm of irrevocable error and froze

open — the future melting
in diazepam, desperation,
affinity, the relentless bower.

Sublimated by noon.
By five, she was married.

~

*it was the evening
i drove back and
back and back
to duty's
house a
precious
worth
devotion
parcel
missing
missing
missing*

~

It was the evening three police cars
stopped a minivan — its every door open —
in the left turn lane on the road
west from the storied world.

It was the evening I carried back
the fey-bright child, the vows,
the months, the lawns,
longing absences,
some documents,

her cat