

While You Went Back to Sleep

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They're never good words—
two-thirty-five in the morning
words. Words that dangle
off the uvula, drooping down

the throat like a guilty kid retreating
before he even commits the crime—
all burnt-eyed and stomach-wrenched,
soft-shoe shuffling back through grass

his head hid away in a baseball cap
he stole last week.
Words that fester from a scratch
overnight, that cling to skin

and get caught in hair. Words
that spider web around the body
hidden under the oak-stained porch
found three days later sunken

beneath the nails. Words that graze
the brow like ghosts looking
for a touch, to feel what they felt
when they felt best. The ones

that never remember names
but always know the address.
The ones that ask for furniture
when Grandpa dies or take

the car when their boyfriend runs
away from home. Words that kiss goodbye,
drive alone and refuse to ever speak
of Halloween last year.

They're never good words—
taxi cab and a half a pack of Marlboro
Lights kind of words. Words that snuff
sleep awake, rendering the sun obsolete.