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## Visiting Home

Phoebe Reeves

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## Reeves: Visiting Home

### VISITING HOME

Phoebe Reeves

*for my grandfather*

Your house burned yesterday. Not  
to the ground, not in consuming

flames, as you might imagine—  
it smoldered in the walls. A pine tree

downed the power lines. Electrical surges.  
Firemen had to tear down the bookshelves,

insulation, floorboards older than you  
would be by now. Everything charred

in that corner you filled for fifty years,  
with your half-glasses and manuscripts.

It's rented now; they'd moved out all your  
things, so none of that burned. They keep saying

it would have been better had the house burned  
to the ground. Aunt Betsy spoke of ghosts.

*Are you there now?*

(Funny, really.

As if anyone knew.)

And now the smell of smoke,  
the water-damage. Pine-boards lying

slant-wise in the wreckage. Mom still  
tells of waiting for the cows to cross,

and riding her bike to get milk  
at the Lewis farm. Remember the pines you planted

when she was eight? Now they're rows and  
rows like a giant's corn field. Your house is older

than our family, but the family trees  
are bringing it down.

Every time I drive the three hours  
back to the City, I think of you

at each pond or field razed  
for winter. Which is not to say

I'm homesick, exactly, though I want  
to dig into the loam of your garden. A kind

of violence necessary for propagation.  
Some trees need a fire to sprout.