

GUN

CALEB CURTISS

AFTER MARK COX

The gun my sister's husband used
to keep her in line back before
she went and killed herself (by accident

or on purpose, I really never knew)
was small, nickel plated, and cheap.
Why would it have to be anything else?

And, I shouldn't say *was*, because
guns are one of those accessories
that never really fall out of style,

passed along from one owner to the next,
no one but a criminal throws their gun away.
Anyhow, he pointed it at me once, just

for fun. We were on his couch, both of us,
getting to know one another a little better.
He talked and then I talked. We were having

a nice time. He talked, and then
while I talked, a dark aperture,
narrow as the pale erasure

on the end of a No. 2 pencil,
appeared before me, and so I laughed.
It was like I had expected him to do

just what he had done: apropos of nothing,
reach into the crevasse between his oversized
couch cushions, produce a subcompact

handgun and point it at me. Was it loaded
or not loaded? I didn't know! And so,
yes, I laughed: *ha-ha*. It was a joke, do you see?

And he laughed, too: *ha-ha*. I laughed
and he laughed, and then, we both
stopped laughing, and then, still smiling—*click!*—

he pulled the trigger.