

What the Eyes Saw

I remember being six years old when Tupac passed.
My sister, home and crying. Asked what it all meant.

Gazing at *All Eyez on Me* for hours. I remember
unsuccessful attempts to contort my fingers, parrot his.

I remember belonging to two discs. Incessant rotation on
Sony Walkman. Satellite in the back seat of a Nissan Maxima

amidst a tireless winter. I remember learning how death felt
when it belonged to a stranger. How we'd string our words

like escape rope down I-75 away from our grandmother,
cancer whittling her bald, a brackish backlash in her voice

bringing insolence with each tone. A stranger, too. Or again,
sitting with my sister trading war stories about my father.

His knees like a straightjacket, hands clutched at her throat
like a jackal clenching its jaded prey. Her friend would run

ten blocks before she called the police. And after the volley,
my sister would take me to sit on a swing in our backyard

from before I was born. Before it snapped under the weight
of a sixteenth birthday party, before the tree collapsed too,

splintered the lawn. Before it became overgrown and my work.
Picture me rolling down the steep yard with a machine

twice my size, yank ripcord unremittingly until the work
was done. Before the anthem of adolescence would calcify

these timid bones against any bad ethics that built them.
The ugly pedigree cooking in my blood. Red and knotted.

Hands like talons. Tupac as two round eyes, eager watch.
The fading silence at album's end. All eyes, into the dark.