

The Empty Cellar

Emily Milliken

We broke
all Dad's wine glasses
when he died.

 No room
 in our grief
 for crystal.

We wanted to keep
the cellar, though—
 walked down
 the grey stone steps
 turned the wrought iron handle
 chose carefully from the walls
of wine,
 as if he had left us his tongue's memory.

Drink white when it's hot.

We sat heavy on the summer
patio looking out at the fields
and the fences and the garden.
 Chardonnay and heat bugs
are the last things any of us
remember for certain.
The day's heat rolled
into a dusty light, crickets
joined the heat bugs.
Dusty light calmed into
a warm dark: fireflies
joined the crickets.

We were still,
watched the landscape change
with the light,
listened to the bugs.
A vibration filled the space between us

until it seemed we were each other
and the bugs
and the flagstones at our feet
and the flowers and the fields
and the popping of the corks.

We woke up the next morning,
having never been asleep—
hazy but not hung over.

A cork mountain.

Bottles reflecting the sun.

The cellar empty,
though none of us remembers drinking.