**Gone Father**

Sheleen McElhinney

I find sparks of him in the deep burrows of my irises, my hands

smaller versions of his when I’m fumbling around the garbage

disposal, or thumbing the strings on my dusty guitar.

Elvis impersonator father, the wiry hairs of his sideburns

still tangled in the wand of my mascara. Full of big dreams father,

sings low into a drugstore tape recorder. *Love me tender, love me*

*sweet.* Domestic father, scrubs a pan with steel wool in a sink

full of suds, lightning striking him through the window.

Electrician father, jolted from ladders, frayed synapses, sends

morse code through my night light from the afterlife, twitching

through the socket in the wall—a warning.

He had a lot of second chances, near deaths, to wake him

from humdrum, but went on in his silent ways, letting the world

break him as it does, each night removing the shoes from his tired

feet, petting the dog, grateful for sleep, where he could unspool

through bolts of darkness into another blissful, temporary death.