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Natural Causes

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I want to know the side that she knew so well
before it was destroyed.

I want the side that flourished and bloomed
The lush green ivy encrusting window panes
Brick wall was all I found

I want to hear the songs you blared on the radio
before you drove off in silence

I want the affection that was once trademark
before it was shelved at a Goodwill

You scarcely notice my touch
There is too much scar tissue
You say that silver is second best
But she was fool's gold

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Tossing bikes to the ground,
we exclaim this new finding:
whorls and curls of bark
strewn in prairie grass
like so much evidence.

Just two young girls, we
can't identify the species
of the tree above; instead
gingerly collect several scraps.
Our small brown hands
rub each piece like worry
stones as we remark on
the marvel of this tree
both alive and not.

The sun is setting and father
wants us home, I say.
So you and I document
each fragment. (It's vital,
this preservation, you say.)

Eventually these remnants
will fit neatly into a shadow box,
beside a dead yellow jacket
and some fragrant sage.

But tonight as we wait,
we lay each bit of bark
on clean butcher paper
for proper examination.