

## Before the Service

That night the city closed  
its blinds and left  
us to fend for ourselves

against the harsh snow,  
the thunder applauding  
the sky. I imagine

my grandmother watching  
from across that thin veil,  
fit for a bride — that she's

the reason the storm  
didn't swipe my car  
off the road on the way

to the emergency braid  
appointment, after the first  
braider lost power

in her booth. I had to beg  
for this slot : same day,  
late evening, snow flooding the street.

On a different night,  
I might have tried  
to tame my own roots,

but how could I chance  
a failed twist out, a poofed  
out press and curl—

my Granny girl  
watching from the altar  
as I walked into her funeral

unkempt? I couldn't bear  
to fail her in that way, looking unloved  
messing up her good name.

I know my Granny  
loved me down

would have bent

that roaring sky  
and came back home  
to me—if only, if only.