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Imago

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Imago

Sam Wood

I like to think my parents married
straight out of their pupae.
This is the way they tell it,

like there was nothing
before they met, just soft flesh,
spindly legs and too bright light.

Together, they parceled their past,
bound by spit and rotten leaves,
into the neatest possible bundles

and mounted these memories,
still wriggling and indignant,
from mold-warped ceiling beams.

When I was four, they began to drop,
nearly mute in the early morning.
They fell most slowly then.

At breakfast, my father would gather
the fallen like late summer tomatoes,
frown at the flattened sides,

before placing them in the garbage,
their ruptured husks seeping history
into the bottom of the white plastic bag.

I left at eighteen, forced out by pods
so thick on the floor that each step left
one cracked and bleeding, the pus

pooling heavy against the hardwood
while my mother ignored the sickly smell,
murmuring, “move along, move along.”

