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Starless

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JESSE MILLNER

Starless

I am dreaming my father in the hot darkness of a tobacco barn. Thin spaces between the pine slats steal outside light as the kerosene heater imitates hell. Yellow leaves hang from sticks stacked to the rafters that are the black upper limit of my sleep. Starless, I am barefoot on this Virginia earth, making contact with the ground that drifts through all the years of my past and beyond—it carries my father's birth cry in its belly, along with arrowheads and the whispering centuries of ghosts. When I am awake I hope to talk with my father, on a Blue Ridge meadow, where rhododendron slips from our mouths and blooms into words of our own making.