

Before Family Was But One

That morning, more of the same—sunrise, Cheerios and skim milk poured til I said *when* from my father's hand, blackberries, blueberries in a bowl on the table. Mondays and Wednesdays, my mother would wake at four to swim, lap after lap. This was all before. Before

the landline call, before I knew the crack of voice, crack of metal. Before I knew how my father looked when he cried. Before bodies on pavement, dusk calling to death. Before I knew the chill of gray water, the sudden dimming of a lightbulb,

the loneliness of fresh carnations. Before I believed in God—after is untouched black coffee on the counter.