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At Ebner Falls

KEN WALDMAN

The big gray stump like a totem
of an owl, October smell
of mud and leaf on a shoe,
I remembered the nightmare
about my grandfather—his face
a pale prune, his bony hands
and fingers tight to my neck—
and rose from the picnic bench,
touched the part of stump that jagged
like an ear, walked to the edge
of a rock. Staring up Gold Creek,
I might have caught a real owl
winging in the woods (though
I might have seen wind shaking
a branch, or my mind zippering open
like a suitcase). Everything roared,
and something flew. Watching
froth shoot, I stepped back, turned
toward the falls, and let go
from the shoulderblades.
Then from the throat.