Scent

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Abstract
That Christmas Eve

we watched Mother open present

after present, useful socks, a colorful blouse, cotton pajamas...

Disciplines
Poetry

Comments
That Christmas Eve
we watched Mother open present
after present, useful socks, a colorful blouse, cotton pajamas,

waited for the jeweled bottle
to rise from its wrapping, for the ooohs
and aahs and you shouldn't haves. Fragrance of juniper, sage,
narcissus. Through frosted
drugstore windows, two weeks earlier,
we'd spied Father turning amber bottles in the air, watched him

hand money to the lady
behind the counter. We'd felt smug
knowing what Mother was getting, she who kept our gifts

hidden in the cedar chest
under the airtight box with her tulle veil,
crushed rose bouquet, and ivory dress with its row of satin buttons.

What happened
to the extravagant gift, my sister and I
must have wondered, then neglected to ask, then forgot we ever knew.

Perfume disperses in layers,
over time. Hint of mandarin, lavender,
sandalwood. The top note is volatile and brilliant, a whiff of citrus,

quick to meet the nose
then evaporate. The heart note
is often flowery, the familiar body of the scent, a whisper of hyacinth

or violet. The base note
contains the heaviest molecules,
slow to develop and lingering, the question of musk and earth.