Behind The Wheel

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The dry elm leaves crackle
and mumble. Maybe
I had gone too far
to unlock the car door,
grip the window ledge,
the steering wheel,
and swing myself in.
I never dreamed of turning
this ignition again
when I lay under hospital sheets
for those 90 days
the IV fed me and morphine
trickled into a vein.
The engine sputters and coughs
as if it can sense how strange
it is to have me back
behind the wheel.
My foot on the clutch
hesitates; the incision
that circles around my navel.
then down to my pubic hair
like a question mark,
might erupt open.
But the knowledge I gain
from illness tells me the worst
never happens when I expect it
and I ease the clutch out,
reverse the car, like the first time
I backed father’s 1960 Chrysler
down the driveway, never
imagining the life
I was driving to.