

IN THIS PHOTO OF MY FATHER

In this photo of my father he sits in a restaurant:
tea on the table, blue suit,

my sister across from him, and,
smiling, he has grown old.

It is morning, and the month before
he won his last supreme court case;

he has sold the sailboat, the piano,
the lot next door; once,

in earth science class, my teacher
explained the difference between submerging

and emerging coastlines, and I
drew a picture of our island

in my notebook, sinking. Everything
is temporary: the smile, the cup

of tea, half gone, the legal conference
where strangers have read

his argument and wait
to shake his hand. In Kindergarten

I drew a picture of my father carrying
a briefcase and his shoes were

also a crab's claws. I didn't know the name
for his profession, didn't understand

what he did behind his desk, where
his law books were open, like windows.

Sometimes, in his office,
a breeze moved through

the room, and we were
the island, and we were the sea.