

What Was He Thinking, My Grandfather Samuel Green

when he reached across the front seat
of the car to offer me a drink—a *snort*

as he called it? There was always a bottle
in the glove box, cheap brandy to coddle

his habit, always in pints for the ease
of a pocket. I was six. He liked to tease,

so that's what I thought it was, at first. I knew he drank.
A separate can in the laundry shed clanked

with his empties. My grandmother only lowered
her head, thinned her lips. Their marriage had soured

years before. He drank while he drove, while he fished;
he drank while he mended his nets. I never saw him smashed

nor ever heard him slur his speech. He was a good
provider, brought most of his wages home, put food

on the table, paid his bills & salted some away.
He was a smart fisherman, sharp at business. Let no man say

he didn't make a good deal. Twelve years he'd swig,
then hold the bottle out to me in a fist as big

as the head of a sculpin, as though I hadn't heard
about occasional other women; how hard

he beat my father once; the whorehouse in Wrangall;
the time he stole a full load of kings from a single

fish trap & made it back with bullet holes
in the pilot house, more in the starboard hull,

& no one ever said whether he'd fired
back; as though he knew I'd have to make hard

choices in my life, & I might as well get some practice,
might as well begin here, right now, with this.