

After

by Tawnysha Greene

I found the dog's teeth in the kitchen today,
Mom says on the phone, that's why he's not eating,

The appointment's in the morning.
It wouldn't be right, she says, without telling you.

Her call comes early the next day, a long pause,
before she says, it is done.

The next week, she sends a small white box in the mail
with tissue paper, a ceramic mold the color of bleached bone—

a paw print, my dog's name, the date it was made,
I didn't know they did this after, says the note inside.

Years later, I clean the attic, find
red rabies tags in an old jewelry box,

the blue ski mask I used to wrap his head
when he shook stitches loose from his ear,

a hat I wore when we lived in Germany,
his orange squiggly hairs along the rim,

a picture of us driving across the country—
in Wyoming, the dog and I standing over the state line,

Mom is taking the picture, night falling behind us,
Dad beckoning me back toward the car.

