

Boxwoods

Your canvas drop cloth pressed like guest linens
even for yard work,
pungent green bits collecting at your knees
as you worked the hedge flanks
with the gray rechargeable clippers.

Grandpa used the red ones to fill his canvas, too,
before hauling the push mower to the creek
to manicure the sparser, shaded grass
should guests come.

Clippers buzz and rattle,
recharged and recharging in memory only—
your head white, his golden
always bowed in summer devotion.

Mind the ivy in the breezeway,
you would say. And the leatherleaf viburnum.

At forty, I cross-cut my lawn,
one diagonal for each of you,
and I recall the volunteer pear tree lost in the vinca.

To think you were just fifty, sixty,
so many years before this year
when I'd like so much to kneel beside you again
but settle for planting boxwoods of my own.

—Andrew Maxfield