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WHO WE ARE WHEN AUGUST COMES

Seventeen years you and I were eight inches below ground,
waiting for summer in the northeast like cicadas sucking roots
and staying close to radicle. It was what everyone did, back then:

find provisions that would last

the reproductive years

the growing seasons

the gradual peeling apart

feed

buy a split-level with an island in the kitchen

swim around sex and the children

slap photos on the fridge – Lake June in Winter –

with magnets that leave scratches

Are we there yet? How much longer? I don't want

to share a bedroom with her, can't we go home?

wonder who is speaking at the end of the day, if anyone.

So now we come upon emergence

crawling out from our hibernation and cable bill, our parent-

teacher confirmations, our Friday night sliders at Applebee's, our

hours of survival and sing – a burgeoning buzz in ears

that rings of age like cut trees. We are too old to mate now,

but I call, listen for your skin hardening, attend to your response.

--Michelle Lee