Filaments

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The woman pushes away from the microscope, she would rather be somewhere else than in the laboratory. Water collected in a gutter below the window is sparkling. Under the lenses, *Volvox aureus* somersaults and splits, sends its elegant green colonies rolling out, to split and roll. She has read, “*Volvox* is like a universe of individual stars, fixed in an invisible firmament.” She thinks there are *Volvox* in the gutter, in China where her brother is. Today in a store she saw a tiny wooden bug in a sandalwood nut; its legs hung loose, trembled with the movement from little weights attached. She hopes he is all right, her brother. Seventy years ago her grandmother, Ardith Thrift, leaned over the puzzle her father was carving; said, “I want to make it beautiful” when her mother asked her what kind of dress she would make from the cotton brought into the swamp. The swamp where everything is green, *Volvox*
dividing; rolling off
the alligator’s lip, through
the cooter’s belly, into Red’s
water dish. And everything
not in water is coming
out of water: the trees rising,
the hummock
where Ardith lived; the stand
of cypress, where there was still
an ivory bill, even the sky
at night—darkness
out of darkness, studded
with stars—which the granddaughter
now follows in the threads
of constellations:

the arc
to Arcturus; big dipper
to Polaris, the celestial pole.

FISHING

The beach rocks when he drops me off
in the morning—and the lawn
and my bed, when I sleep after fishing
all night. My chest
and stomach flat on the mattress.
Rise and fall, like a line
on the fathometer’s spool of turning
paper. My eyelids—I close
my eyes and see the red glow
of the compass in the cabin.
When I wake, everything will be still:
my boots at the door, the lawn
fresh with light, upright cedars,
horizontal stretch of sea.