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# Self-Portrait as a Childhood Photograph of My Father

With eyes open so  
little for the camera, mouth

hung in wordless

intimacy, you  
would think the lens

a barrel, light

a bullet

in the chamber. Black  
and white. The decisions

of shadow —beneath

a hat brim, relief;

across a shirt, foliage  
unfalling,

encrypting the flannel—

what it takes, held  
against what light pilfers



into form, feels often

permanent: recall the man  
who, only when

holding, once, the skull  
of a small

animal, looking through

its empty socket into  
the total

darkness

of its interior, felt  
—or knew—himself

an animal. A human

in a frame  
which seemed more

and more, the longer  
he looked,

inescapable. Which is

to say, real.

Light

in a box—

and nowhere else.

