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## First

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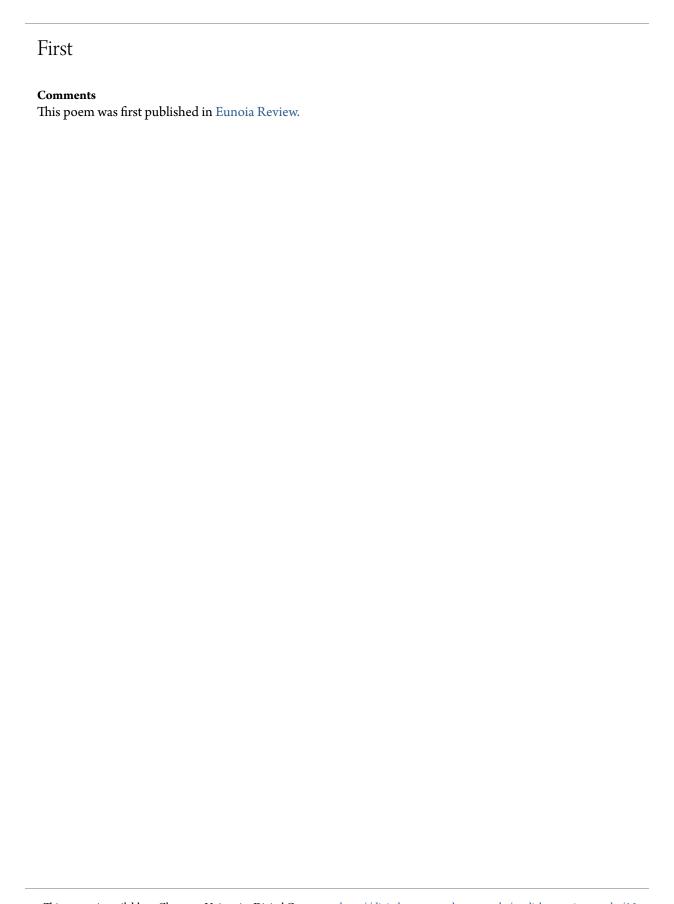
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## **First**

Dull sounds running through the trees, dropped and shaken, sapid Galas clenched like blue fists

on the chilling dirt, flecking the orchard rows, the mush under my bare soles rinsing to a sudsy clay as we walked back through the wet grass.

The house was still with early dark as if the windows had been papered black, the far road a rising river of headlights from the porch.

I sat beside my sister on the stair. She curled and fell asleep under the big limb of my arm, tart smell of her dried sweat just like my own.