

All That Remains Understood

The day I gave up teaching
To become a youth camp director

The step I always skip
Because the porch is rotting

The tree I touch each Tuesday and Thursday As I walk by
at exactly 7:24 a.m.

The student I always mistook
For my high school valedictorian

The junk shop I meant to browse
But never have

The travel mug I fill again and again
Without ever washing

The grout between the tiles
At the foot of my toilet

The one hair I pluck every other week
From my right ear

The letter I saved
That said my tenure was denied

The half can of green spray paint that hits the pavement
Each time I open the door of my pickup

The cactus I water
That seems always poised to fall

The picture of my high school buddy Mark
That I still carry in my wallet

The fine scratches on the face
Of the only guitar I ever bought new

The Star Trek communicator I keep
In the top drawer of my desk

The "Jeep" hat I wear
Whenever I don't have time to shower

The coffee beans I can only buy
When I'm visiting my favorite coffee house in South Dakota

The office in which I spent long hours
Just across the hall from Vince and Amy, who still teach

The boots I always thought were real leather
But, as it turns out, aren't

The side of the bed
I sleep on

The side of the bed My wife
sleeps on

The sides on which we both
Lie awake

The maple my friend, Kirk
Is buried under

The doctoral degree in its red-leather folding case (fake—the *leather*, that is)
On top of a box of books in my garage

The antlers of the deer my grandfather shot
Sitting atop the same box

The article, *The Writing Center: An Essential Element of the Teacher Training Program*,
Upon which I collaborated with two colleagues and never finished

The poems I left unwritten, the songs I left unsung And this
one.