

What Glass Shards Are Called

Named for a process: molten glass dripped into water will shatter.
Something about the molecular structures. Something about watching one become a thousand.

My father describes the process one afternoon at the old studio, across the lot
from where a ballet company stores their giant wooden Nutcrackers.

In the studio, he knows where to find each color, his jars lined up and packed with shards
to fill in the concave plaster molds. He tries to teach me how to arrange the colors, shapes.
Wants to share what life is his.

I think that's what you're supposed to do with family.
You get choked up, otherwise, kitchen drains
after washing out a pot of burned rice,
rain gutters crammed with leaves.

First it was sloping clay on the potter's wheel. Now designing, molding, baking, mounting
slabs of glass on walls, pedestals, iron skeletons. It's why he dropped out of college, or so he tells me.
Or he told himself. Or someone told him

he wasn't good enough at anything else.
His father used to buzzcut his hair
every summer. Practicality was all.
As soon as he moved out, my father grew
his hair into a long, red ponytail.
He lived in the studio, plaster under his nails,
checked the kilns in the middle of the night, learned how to create

a fusing of shapes into something, if not durable,
able to imagine solidity. A shaking of shards into the spirals and diamonds
and deckled edges of the mold, sun-tipped eyes settling down, holding each other as heat flares.

I cup my hands and he fills the bowl with azure and wheat, violet and umber.

If you don't move, the shards are soft.
We watch their gathering until my hands are full of frit.