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Dead Woman Contemplates Cooking Breakfast

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DEAD WOMAN CONTEMPLATES
COOKING BREAKFAST

Shoshana McIntosh

The computer screen is a pale green against the taupe wall.
The dead woman never exited her eBay shopping cart,
the seller waits for the highest bidder to claim the buy—no answer.
Outside the pavement is sucking dawn light; she does not rise with the mourning,
but lies stuck in the pavement, skin wet with light.
She lies with the 500 ants devouring a whole piece of cherry pie left
over from the night before.
She contemplates returning to care for the house, but
her muscles cannot lift the keys from the piano that’s dying in the living room.
Now the sun slips over the windowsill and pours like tar into the house.
She smiles as her china is swallowed without a sound.

There are only echoes of smiles hiding in the kitchen now: toothless smiles.
Outside, a little girl is curling her tongue around an ice-cream cone.
It’s not sweet like she thought it would be,
so she throws it in the ditch where you try to catch her tears with a clammy palm.
Seagulls peck at her as she cries, and tell her she’ll be “better, faster, stronger”
if only she forgets you.
Her father teaches philosophy as he licks mustard off his broken fingernails:
you didn’t pack him a napkin in his lunch today.

Now the house is swaying, to nothing; no music plays,
just the sound of salt scraping cheeks.
The children are crying at the table, and milk is pouring out of their ears,
but you know that cooking breakfast will only lead to hunger again.