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Her Black Braids Broke Down

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Her Black Braids Broke Down

No one will remember me, she thought.

She hangs upside down,
rain water collects in her open mouth,
behind her teeth.

She researches family members who exhibited sociopathic tendencies.
Lights a lantern outside
the bedroom door
at night
to be certain no spirit steals
her intentions,
written on moleskins,
under a pillow.

Dad kissed her on the head and asked "Why does your upper lip always itch?"
Still asks herself this question, there are a million answers.

He said it's because she couldn't keep quiet, always opened doors with stolen keys.
Theft is a common theme in her life,
whether it be a pair of gold hoop earrings, heavy,
lion-head shaped clasps,
or any man with a dagger hanging
between his legs.

She wrote a novel every time he breathed onto her neck in the nighttime.

She knew
because of the stories Dad told her, before
he crushed sage and fern together with his hands—that
this man controlled her with his silence, devoured her with his rage, and
would kill her
with his body someday.

She should've stayed invisible to men, but broke that magic long ago—
It wells up in the belly, radiates warmth through the heart and brain, you see it in her face.