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Freezing Beans

JODI DEUR

The wood table
has disappeared
beneath the bean
mountain. Rhythmic
and steady, I
chop, severing
head and tail from
green bean body.
Fresh garden dirt
blackens my nails,
and runs down my
fingers, drying
in clots like blood.

My brother stands
across from me
with the beans I've
dissected. The
backs of them strain,
bend, and stretch, till
at last they crack
and fall, lifeless,
into the pot.
Short and broken,
they are helpless
victims of his
skillful fingers.

Steam clouds the air.
Peering through its
hazy mist, I see
the cutting board
transformed into
a guillotine.
Chop, chop, crack, crack,
chop, chop, crack, crack.

We work, silent,
hypnotized by
monotony
and the constant
blur of the blade.
A harsh buzz jolts
us alive, and
I rush over
to stare at the
boiling water.
Iridescent,
glowing green, the
beans swirl. In their
final death they
radiate with
an uncommon
portion of the
color of life.

We pack them tight—
squashing, smashing
them inside the
square Tupperware.
Stacked to our chins,
we stumble down
the steep stairway.
The freezer waits,
an icy grave,
till winter when
there will be beans,
frozen and dead,
for us to eat.