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The Eschatologist's Wife

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The Eschatologist's Wife

Jade Hurter

Andrea Saunders Gereighty / Academy of American Poets Award Second Place Winner

I.

I was a child when we married,
nineteen, with seasalt under my nails.
It was February, beneath a dying oak.
When he kissed me, there was a pearl
hidden on his tongue. I took it into my mouth carefully
so as not to choke.

II.

Our marriage bed filled with the feathers
of crows. Their ghosts invaded my sleep.
Mornings I would find eyelashes in the strangest places,
behind my ears and between pages
of the Sunday Times
or embedded in egg whites, partly cooked.

III.

In the top drawer of his bureau: three chunks of chalcedony
and a nest of my own dark hair,
his talismans against mortality.
Those days were a haze of lilac
and I was out on the porch every night,
smearing fireflies into my skin.

IV.

For three years he covered the bedroom walls
with clocks, loud as click beetles.
Still he slept, lashes dark and lips parted.
Mornings we memorized the Harper's index
and ate real maple syrup,
the consistency of water.

V.

One summer we awoke to find the yard
a jungle of poison hemlock, sprung up overnight,
choking the fruits off of the peach tree.
He uprooted the plants with bare palms.
For weeks after he wore gardening gloves
when we made love.

VI.

That year we vacationed on a shoreline covered
in pink jellyfish. I gathered them in piles
on the sand. They glowed in the sunlight.
Dead starfish dried in the sun
as we cooled our hands in the tidepools.

VII.

He became an old man
as my hair silvered.
I watched him on the porch after dusk
rubbing asteroid dust over his body.
Those nights the earth became small
and the flowers waned dark.

VIII.

He left gemstones
scattered throughout the house.
I buried him in the sea,
his ashes floating like wet stars.
Alone, now, I think of the seaweed
drinking him in like salt.