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Radio
Linda Smukler

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RADIO

She sits with her legs stretched out on top of the radio fan blowing up between a baby reaches up and out the bars are high its face is red it cries "a something ma—ma—a something ma" over and over the fan muffles the sound but it's there in the room like a spreading rash the weather's too hot for anything let alone a baby too hot to hear it and smell its puke and no one around to help but the baby's grandfather and the girls downstairs too hot to get up and turn off the Andrews Sisters her husband's off working and it's a shame thought he'd make more of himself than building houses and coming home smelling like tar and sawdust it's a dirty business and on top of it all they have to live here paint chipping off the ceiling and walls falling down no other way to afford a place and her own father on the ground floor running his bar or more like he just watches it run no way this child's gonna grow up around drunks and freaks and its grandfather slinking around haunting its heart the baby's cries get louder lost three before this one shut up blow on it soap it down she gets up and picks up the fan she points it directly on the baby walks into the kitchen and comes back carrying a blue tray of ice turns the ice tray over and stands there as the icecubes bounce off the baby's head ice little baby feel good? that's real fine she walks out of the room and slams the door the fan drowns out the baby's screams ice melting around its ears