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Kitchen, Fully Updated

Kristine Kopperud
Project for Advancing Healthcare Stewardship

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Kitchen, Fully Updated

Cover Page Footnote

This flash essay originated in a Writing in the Dark creative writing workshop, taught by Jeannine Ouellette of Elephant Rock.

Kitchen, Fully Updated

I don't know when having a window above the kitchen sink became commonplace, but I would guess it evolved as the lady of the house became the mistress of meals. In my mother's day (and her mother's, before her), this window was clearly a helper, for tracking kids darting from the garden hose, say, their feet pounding the sopping lawn, as they wrested the snaking hose from each other, or paused, guppy-mouthed, to gulp the tinny stream.

The now-standard kitchen window, with flecks of gristly residue and soap film spotting the pane, like mine, is also a distraction, some longer place to look when the ferment of routine, and sometimes drain-deep decay, can't be put off. It's where you look if you're turning away from a storm, and, in my experience, where you lean out for fresh air. The kitchen window, in the heart of a home, is time's keeper, a vantage to spot the first lofting monarch or inhale brief lilacs, warming in the sun. It's the perfect matte to moonrise so arabesque that you run desperate for a camera.

I am looking at houses, for the day (soon) that I must make a new home for my daughter. The home she was born into is now *broken*, and the divorce decree requires me to move. Without thought, I've struck a pattern in my home search. I nudge my hip to the counter at the kitchen sink, pressing where my pants and shirt would get splotted if I were scrubbing an unwieldy pan, or spraying a cooling rack. I reach for the tap and look out. What life moves from here? Can I read the incoming cumulonimbus? Gauge the wind from its jitter through light leaves? Do I recognize, now, the patter of abuse? Will I feel its soaking mist, before it pours?

Some homes sell on the long, clear view, over the canopy, or out across the water. Some promise close privacy, in the company of bugs battering against the screen. I am somewhere between, still wanting to check casually on my heavy-headed hollyhocks, or the padding of my calico cat from the pasture-tall grass, the away and back that have come to be usual, or unusual, depending on the hour.

What I need, I see, is just this frame, the soft sameness and lulling discovery of what shifts, among the dishes and the water, washing in changing light. I might already know what's out there, but I will look. I look always anyway.