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## Years of This

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Years of This · *Maria Flook*

It's like beginning small, the business  
is marriage. First they buy the sign  
and stack the shelves.  
Her legs are long and cool  
as fluorescent lights.  
She sits aglow at the cash register  
or with the adding machine in her lap.

People will buy anything sold in pairs.

Years of this and they buy real estate.  
He builds the house and adds on and adds  
on. On the patio, the children wiggle  
their toes in wet cement, practicing  
the names they will die with.

She is still adding and subtracting,  
the lines in her palms do not lengthen  
or multiply. The wrinkle in her womb  
becomes the final namesake.

They started with nickels, dimes, animal  
hungers. First he mowed the lawn,  
she weeded. Then the gardener came  
three times a week.  
Now from their condominium window  
a final geranium can be seen above traffic.  
Its bloom tight pink  
like an infant's fist behind glass.  
They imagine their children returning, repentant.  
All of them religious and sad.