

## The Orphan

My sister is in the kitchen, hopping from foot to foot, singing a song about some piglets and a duck. I am the presence of sunlight. The afternoon comes with the swans' feathers and mung beans, with which my sister plays her games—she's all around the floors with her feathers and beans. I am the flatness of the table and the pattern of motes. My sister believes in animals. She believes that, into the circled yard, an elephant will come, trumpeting, boasting a collection of cartwheels and a collection of bells. I fear her ecstasy. I fear she cannot take it, the way she has taken this house. My sister says she does not see me; she says, *Oh you don't know a thing*. I am the way she swells in the eyes when she thinks; I am her grip on the railing and the number of stairs. Every night she lies down, I am her sleep.

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## Exile

Dear Mother, I'm in a boat between the cities. These are the harvest weeks, the music carried in laps of water. I'm flat as the black sky, your face there, your fine hair draped between stars, made of salt, made of losing. Here there is a dry heat. Every day the accordion reeds, the shadow heavy in the doorway where the children pour out in their soccer shorts. I am the tall thing among them; I am everyone's uncle. In the mornings I button my modest shirt, and in the evenings the water is black but sweet with the lights of the cities. Dear Mother, fall upon me. Bury me in their faces. Between songs I will glimmer.