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Elizabeth On A Hard 14th

Maggie Crumley

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ELIZABETH ON A HARD 14TH

This girl whose brown eyes
devour books,
thick hair
falls to woman's hips,
whose body grew inside my body awhile,
whose round face
is foreign and familiar,
who borrows my gestures,
lends me her clothes,
whose survival
from her first breath
has seemed crucial
to mine,
this girl
who's forgotten her
secret palace, her splendid
entries through magic portals
into amused grocery stores,
who doesn't remember
floating face down,
my futile resuscitation,
the uncle who squeezed her stomach
till she vomited water
and breathed, or how
I shook for weeks,
this girl
 who sighs heavily
because the frosting
slid off her cake and
it seems a portent,
whose lip droops,
is hard to say
I love you to,
difficult to cheer.

It used to be easy—
clean diaper, tit
in the mouth,
tickle to the belly,
and you'd smile.
Now it's an awkward hug,
adult conversation, and pain.
I wish for a minute
I could pick you up,
pat you, say there there,
make everything better
than it is.