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Dreaming the Cabbage Patch

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DREAMING THE CABBAGE PATCH

Don't mull it over with your fingers. Don't ask whether you're here because you took Mother's advice on how to carry scissors, closed, points down, don't run. Don't brood about whether sardines are hermetically sealed. It doesn't hurt to give up clocks. Give up cutting and pasting articles. *George Seversen Crawls 1,000 Miles for Jesus*. Shoe polish and suicide require too much concentration. Have confidence in yourself. Pick lint. I know you can find the bathroom. Watch cobwebs. Think of Howard Hughes urinating into Mason jars. Nobody cares if you eat out of tin cans. Sit on the couch, watch it snow, think about mending your head with vinegar and brown paper. Read Peter Rabbit.

I know your hands remember how summer folded up on itself like a steel vegetable steamer. Panic is a bad smell from old kitchens. Think of cabbage moths feasting on finger leaves.

It is of little consequence that your fingers play Debussy in the flesh of his back. Indulge the thick taste in your mouth with sauerkraut. Ignore old friends. Read Peter Rabbit. Imagine black-eyed peas, bloating and sprouting in loam, unfolding like cabbages. Dream of your French braids, Grandma's narrow walk. Dream forsythia, thickets with burrows. The tar baby. Soft-boiled eggs and milk like cream on the ferry to Denmark.

Though your hands shake, you're dreaming away the ghost of the woman who'll take your place. The one in the sunhat, tending the spring garden and laughing.