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Songs for an Old Woman

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SONGS FOR AN OLD WOMAN

1

She sits by the window
knitting her fingers
into wrinkles
while another sun
rolls its crazy eye
over the trees.

2

From the next farmhouse
she hears someone
chopping wood,
the thud of an ax
ripping between her ears.

3

In the fields
a horse and plow
steer like a car
without the right
front tire.
Smoke tunnels from
the pickle factory
in Croswell. A man
yells and swings
a whip at the
horse.

4

All day
the old woman imagines
her husband is alive:
carrying in pails of milk

from the barn. She sees
her many children running
and playing with the rusted
two bottom plow, old slats
of wood, the bones of a
raccoon.

5

Before dusk,
it starts to rain; the distant
crumbling of thunder.
The rotted wood beams of the cabin
squeak as if they were hollow and
infested with bats.

6

She sits in a chair,
staring into the yellowed glass window
and listens:
this cutting, this plowing,
that puts her to sleep, that wakes her up.