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## The Wakening

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## THE WAKENING

Up all night  
with a hundred dying chicks  
in the jaundiced light  
of the coop, my father steps  
into the first pools of day  
pausing at the door  
to scrape the dung from his boots,  
leaning his back to the jamb  
as he thumbs small curls of tobacco  
into the burnt-out bowl of his pipe.  
All night his ears rang  
between the echoes of his heart  
with the sickly *cheep, cheep*  
of small white heads agape  
from twisted necks,  
beaks dropped open to ask  
what no one ever knows, refusing  
feed and drink as they died,  
twisted in the palm of his hand.  
And as the sun tears itself  
on the blades of new roofs where  
orchards he farmed once stood,  
he strikes a match and draws deep,  
and the gray mare ambles into dew  
from the musky shadows of the barn,  
her dark tail switching  
the first flies of the day.  
Squinting into the light, a pain  
too subtle to name settles  
in his chest, and as he begins  
his chores, the morning  
spreads over him like a stain.