Drawing a Breath

Terri McFerrin
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I.

For twenty years, she slept twenty hours a day. The hawk, its gaze, woke her. An egg ached incurably in her head. Daily, she balanced the bun, the china doll—she walked deliberately—might fall. A son died nevertheless and shone the next morning, a faint pink behind the clouds. She felt no further way to grieve. She consulted a mirror and all things receded from her eyes; her feet were far away.

II.

Grandma Layton perches her husband in a tree, to draw a nest. A pad of cheap paper in her fat lap. A fist of pencils. She sighs so the leaves flutter round the shape of that old man. She draws without looking, at the paper, away from him, an honest line.
III.

The breasts, the checks in the old house dress press against the view. A delicate distortion enters the breeze, the tree in Kansas.

The jonquils loom, the limbs tremble, the face wrinkles, the wings fold, to fit the shell.

It is the air holds him up, the birds that gather her wisps of hair.