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The Woman Who Called Whales Across the Fields

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THE WOMAN WHO CALLED WHALES ACROSS THE FIELDS

You hear her first one evening in August,
click click click over the fields, stone house,
the tin roof of the barn. Then for months
there's nothing, just the changing air,
roadside filling with asters and primrose,
the slow overtaking of water by ice.
You sit all day at the round wooden table
listening for her between snowfalls.

Then it is April near chickweed,
an afternoon of hepatica and celandine,
and off by the pond, yes, a sound like rocks
clicked off each other under water.
You follow it through light that looks
all wrong over the dirt road.
And then there are clouds like belly pleats,
sounds across the watercress like jug music,
and in the morning the alfalfa pushed down,
an old shawl on the fence, the kitchen quiet.

For weeks after, you walk back to that place
where windows have been nailed shut,
and remember the sound as though up through
a small boat's ribs, that thin oily film
across trees and horizon.

And how as you closed
the front gate, there were those sounds,
as though someone were twisting rubber bands
across the end of a long braid just before sleep.