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Omens

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OMENS

Some nights in the pasture
silence falls ahead of the snow.
There's something I can't put my finger on,
but it's the same way I know a child is buried
under an old farmhouse with her doll
when I close her bedroom window
and am afraid to turn around.
It's a feeling I first had early one winter on the raft
moments before the whole lake froze.
With my foot I pushed the boat towards shore,
the oars crossed inside
like two thin arms dripping water on the wooden floor.
I did not know this was a sign
for my mother's drowning that spring
though for weeks I saw her stand up to row against the wind
in my dreams.

These omens are never clear.
Like the pillow of feathers ripped open,
left hanging on a nail for the cold rain.
Or the white hens that have taken flight
like bats around the darkening yard,
the single rooster suddenly mute and testing his ruffled neck.