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Small Potatoes

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Lynn Rigney Schott

Small Potatoes

They're the ones we can't leave in the ground,
the babies not to be abandoned, the next generation.
Dirt clings to their inconsequential curves
and I curse at the sink the scrubbing of these
slippery, second-class, under-sized excuses for spuds.
Every year it's the same.
Waste-not-want-not was not wasted on me.

Every year the small thing matters more.
Memory condenses and conforms us to its habit—
a whole season in a single scent (wisteria,
say, or sweet clover) or a year boiled down
to the name of a disease.
What remains is simply a sieve-full:
a life sustained by a series of holes.

The candles we light, the rice we throw, the threads
we pick, the hair that comes out in our brushes
repeat us over and over. Like dots on dice
and the useless luck that lives in them
we turn up everywhere. We are snake-eyes.
Small potatoes. We save ourselves for seed.