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Untitled

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Francesca M. Abbate

I

Today is almost summer. Lila and I drive ten miles out of town to play keno at the all-night truck stop. At the desk, a man in a pinstripe shirt trades us gold tokens for our coins. Lila puts one in her purse and one in my back pocket. She asks me if we're safe yet. The machines against the walls light up. The numbers change.

II

A few leaves cluster in the tree branches, a few clothespins hang staggered on the wire running from the back porch to the lawn. Lila sits at the picnic table with a tin ashtray and a book. I fold pieces of paper into boxes and arrange them by size. I consider the term *deliberate topiary*. I consider Lila in the horse's eye this afternoon, after we hiked up to the plateau. Is there a half-language of want? A way to measure the dimensions of sky in a horse's head? There are a few hours of light left.

III

The wind picks up, blows the blue tarp over the rabbit cages against the house next door. Lila leaves to turn the porch lights on and won't come out of the kitchen.

I can't move. I'm thinking of the numbers again.
I'm thinking of a word
which would mean both *topography* and *God*.
Director? The lights shine on the wet slats
of the fence like spotlights. I wipe rain
off my neck, off my forearms.
It takes both hands to find my face in the dark.