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The Color of Thunder

Mark Medvetz

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THE COLOR OF THUNDER

Dear Tracey: Sage is the color of thunder and your cabin dust stands hard against the inherited scrub of old-lady marrow, so we think like DPs: soap and water. With the ache of mother-talk, the dullness of unavailing fathers,
we take on dirt, webs, and cracks between logs. Outside the window,
swallows skip pond water, reflection of sky. Winter loiters untroubled, yet the thin green of aspen is palpable. You sweep while I stand at the window considering how to make friends with approaching rain. I find my mother's
voice in the faraway resonance of sky: "stay away from windows
when there's a storm." It's her fear of lightning. We laugh quickly;
thunder is coming, and I tell you about the rage that cloaked my father. Another actor arrives; she is angry with what she finds:
a cabin too shy with its charm to quiet her: a storm yet to saddle.
Her gloom shakes you into speech. Broom scatters dust balls; you expose memories of a father who promised but never fixed
shatterings of your mother's life. Now lightning chases thunder.
Cleaner, the cabin still needs the soft touch of second-hand objects. We take the pass to Ennis and for the moment rain abates. An eyebrow of blue arches over the mountains.
Somehow,
we know, the quality of our lives is good; better than where we came from. Ennis is gentle and the Dairy Queen is enough.

Heading home, we rise above the valley, the expanse
chokes us: an irretrievable gasp at something beautiful.
In the cabin we wonder what our grandmothers would say;
those sisters of the two standard sizes: yours large, soft;
mine small and mean; both capable of roofing a house,
starting
a fire with a stare, sparkling at questions of yesterday.
We see them in this cabin; we've put them there, displacing
present for past, knowledge for fear. Tomorrow, rehearsals
begin. You, Madame Audley, have a secret: an undeserved
past capable of destroying a future filled with ambitions
of wealth and status. Should we, like Madame, hide our past?
Not because it threatens our future, but because it haunts
our present. You laugh and the last of cabin dirt
spills from the pan. Outside, thunder hunts lightning; inside
you sing softly, "A woman's touch, a woman's touch, never
underestimate
a woman's touch." Here's to a good performance. Mark

*Documents of turn-of-the-century immigrants were stamped
DP for "Displaced People."