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Red Rising

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RED RISING

where muggers hid behind elevators waiting, mirrorless, to tear off
my arms

where the floor rose in a blue mosaic under echoing hallways with
many numbers

and many nights kept secret under the occasional flowered mat, the
even

more occasional mezuzah, white scroll with its black Hebrew letters
like a curse,
shanah madeleh

arriving into that space of orange shag of brown leather and doorposts

bearing sayings about my life their white white faces

this Vatican of Yale New Haven the hospital of Saint
Raphael where my Jewish uncle lay dying

mother's arm drip-dripping in echo that bag

cancer bag of clear thoughts of pristine cells

icing veins as mother sat with lollipop

and nurses waving games to the tenements, to the projects her penance
forgive me

her penance for the open doors, the cake with too much

buttercream, her voice screaming silent in the hallway, her mouth
covered, like this,
the handful

I throw on the pine box, white creases

of my palm under the dirt, white

lines I return to, between characters staring mutely fierce in the
Hebrew

this scroll I now undo, taking carefully the ribbons the leather
straps of this box and winding them

about my arm, a tourniquet