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## Gladys, Pearwoman

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## GLADYS, PEAR WOMAN

near 50, wants to break every mirror she sees. She wants to, *needs* to stop looking. Harry, who is only a photograph now, once told her she was made of legs and moonlight and red, red love.

Since then, children and diets and un-diets, till now Gladys sits all day in front of the television. On the shopping channel, tents and tunics to turn her into a secret. Gladys orders one in every shade.

One day, delivering them, the doorman offers Gladys a smile. Ancient reaction -- Gladys is smitten and later, she orders a rowing machine. *How many pounds, she wonders, are standing bewteen me and love?*

When it arrives, she rows and rows till her living room is an ocean.

Her daughter begins to complain. "You haven't seen the baby in weeks" she tells Gladys. To which Gladys answers, "I was busy giving birth to myself."

Finally beautiful again, she and the doorman have dinner. Gladys picks olives out of her salad. She scans the menu for fat.

The doorman sparkles like silverware, and when dessert arrives, he spoons cherry vanilla into Gladys' trusting mouth. They plan their second outing, a wine-tasting, perhaps, and when the doorman opens his wallet to pay the check, Gladys pretends not to see the picture of his wife.

Later, hungry goodnight kiss, and Gladys fumbling to open the door.

"I know all you secrets" the doorman says into her skinny ear and turns the key with a flick.

Once inside, they make slithery love on the carpet, her tiny dress flung across the rowing machine. It is only later, when it's over and the doorman gone, that Gladys remembers his wife, thin as a picture, sitting all day in a wallet right there, in front of his heart.