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KAREN CONNELLY

FAMILY REUNIONS

The other people quit their stone fields to come here.
They slip in from nights that even the snow abandons.
They leave ashes in their glasses
and stains on the table.
The house is littered with bits of their hair and skin.
Bones clatter through the holes in their pockets.
All night long their hands scythe the air.
They dance their words to bloody stumps.
They bite the world and spit it out on the table,
bitter, determined only to dirty
every glass in these cupboards
and break at least three.
Rage keeps them awake until night opens to dawn
gently, like a woman’s hands.
Then they unfold the worn quilts of their lives.
But their skeletons do not soften in sleep.
On waking, they are sad and broken.
They drink coffee with tongues swollen by talk and grief.
During breakfast, they seed the floor with sugar
and spill the cream, complain that the toast
is never warm enough.
When they leave, they walk like shadows
who have lost their bodies to wolves.
They are the people from a history I’ve forgotten.
I ignore mirrors and cut my hair.
I bleach my eyes white
to blind the other side of me.
I wash every glass carefully,
with a soft cloth,
breaking nothing.