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## Broken Morning Has Broken

The power is out again. My mother sits  
at the kitchen table, sucking on the rim of an empty  
coffee mug and fingering a lighter with the words *for a life*  
*stuck out here* printed on it. All of the blinds are closed

but I watch from the porch as the wind pulls  
our fence out of the ground post by post,  
like teeth. I know that later, when the landscape  
is exhausted with grey, we will have to check

the house for bruises, press our hands  
into the damp spots where the earth gapes as if  
we could fill the vacancy. Last time,  
I tried. Climbed into each hole and waited there

until something grew. It took months. My mother came and stood  
with me everyday, singing hymns under her breath. *Out here*, she says,  
*there's always space to fill*, she pauses, *and not enough*  
*to fill it*. She spends her time humming to occupy

the spaces between my eyelashes. Tells me how she sealed the crack  
in her glasses lense with sound, filled my cavities,  
closed the miles separating us and our neighbors. The neighbors  
that we forgot that we had until they decided,

one weekend, to set off the fireworks that reminded my mother  
of the rhythm of *her mother's* sleep apnea and we used  
the rest of the day to pound it into the table,  
making ridges at equal increments every time

something exploded. We went around and around until  
we'd whittled our table into something entirely new,  
something I could scrub my reflection into, but wielded  
teeth and claws all the same. Bulging with her beat, with her mother,

with our neighbors. Today, as she sits at our new  
old table, she hums *Morning Has Broken* while  
she flicks the lighter on and off and on  
again. *Morning has broken*

my mother motions me over with her lit hand  
*like the first morning* the house loses a shutter,

taken to God with our fence posts *Blackbird has spoken*  
I sit in her lap even though I have outgrown her *like*

*the first bird* she feeds me frozen grapes  
but I am not hungry *Praise for*  
*the singing* and then she stops. The storm  
does not. *Praise for the singing* comes again,

and I'm ready for it to take this time and  
it does. *Praise for the signing, praise*  
*for the singing, praise for the singing* before  
it loses all meaning. *Pra ise fo rth esig ningp*

*raise*. There are only fragments now,  
I think that she is choking *pr ai sef ort*  
*tes ign ingpr ai se* I try it myself now  
I say the words for her now *praise*

*for the morning* and she breaks further  
until all that is left is hissing. It's a feral sound,  
and I wonder if it intrudes on her space,  
if our neighbors are scratching it into

their table, using a knife that splits skin  
and maybe wood. I keep going, singing over her *Sweet*  
*the rain's new fall*, but it protrudes *like(ssss)the(sssss)first(sssss)*  
*dew(sssss)fall* and she gets louder and I can't hear

what I am saying or what she is saying and the song  
diverges into a thing that is not the song anymore  
but a retching or a birthing—depends on  
who is listening *sssprssaaississsseefsssssooo*

*ssssrrrrr* and I want to know what we are giving  
praise for because it sounds like it might be caught  
in a vacuum cleaner and that I might need to dig it out  
with my fingernails like I did with the choir binder

that my mother buried in one of the holes  
from the storm back in May but it is seeking  
our space, this thing that isn't *Morning Has*  
*Broken* and isn't us either. My mother

is ready to let it move into our bodies in her effort  
to fill up all of the ditches. The lighter flames in her palm  
and I watch it spar with her voice as broken *Morning*  
*Has Broken* seeps from her pores. I think that her mouth

might be closed and I think that the storm might  
be over and I think that broken *Morning Has Broken*  
might actually be my real mother now and so I am trapped  
by the sound I think is my mother as it hardens into an empty woman

holding a coffee mug with bite marks, settling into  
a chair that looks like it's been through something hungry.  
Her lighter clicks one more time  
and nothing happens. It starts to rain again. No wind this time.

