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One Day

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J. I. Kleinberg

ONE DAY

1

before sunrise I wake to the sawing honk of geese over the house

I repeat the donkey-bray
of their call—watch for magenta
flooding into dawn-lit
crabapple blossoms—admire
the punctuated chatter of chickadees
ellipses of lemony tulips

2

from the middle of your poem I borrow the taste of the ocean

I dip a spoon of brine
raise it to my mouth
to tongue its brackish broth
repeat each mollusk madrigal
rinse my body's restless shore
with salted words

3

I cannot name the afternoon's blue mystery or speak her language

I return to stone because it is what I am
to dust because it made the stone
to water that urged the dust
light that guided water
and darkness because it understands
the worn petroglyphs of memory

4

each evening I fill an old bucket with shadows and carry it home

shoulder bent forward with its weight
I pour darkness into corners
under chairs and table
in cupboards and bookshelves
beneath my narrow bed
penumbra of the day's lost beginnings

5

though I know little of faith I can make a prayer by calling its name

where birds nest in downy dark
I kneel in a tangle of words
fold into languid quiet
listen for rain that whispers
the name of the holy night
—wafer on the tongue of dreams