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Roberts: My Imaginary Husband

MY IMAGINARY HUSBAND

Kim Roberts

1.

My husband always talks
about the wind
that shakes up the trees;

he's got sixteen
different ways to describe
how the leaves chatter.

I can think of
a half dozen sounds
I'd rather hear.

But my husband is always
most joyful
when everything looms.

He dances in splayed sneakers
across asphalt's brittle trust
while the trees declaim,

wagging their fingers,
and the alley's loose chain link
rattles like a guard dog.

When everything looms—
a storm, a fight—
my husband is bouyant;

he loves most the frayed
and dangerous edges
that threaten to call us out of our names.

2.

My husband wields a spatula
like a sceptor,
lords it over the eggs

toiling in the pan.
He likes to cook breakfast
in nothing but underwear.

As he stands at the stove,
I sit brightly at the table
like a well-informed citizen

(for I know better than most the doings
of his duchy,
the raising and lowering

of his flag). The minions
of his hair
creep across the elastic border

of his boxers, threatening
to traverse the paunched
stomach-Sahara to reach

their northern brethren.
But they never do.
Like so much else about my husband,

that could only happen
in a parallel kingdom,
a realm with no name.

3.

My husband,
I clothe you in salt,

which drapes across your shoulders
in a shimmering pale wave

and falls, toga-like,
to your marvelous thighs.

I am thirsty thinking of it
but you remain immobile,

like a pharoah,
like King Tut who traveled

to the afterlife guided
by twelve painted baboons, one for each

hour of the long night.
I search your canopic jars,

breaking each heavy wax seal:
here are your two grey eyes,

still echoing with the lines
of my face; there is your tongue,

tasting of salt,
still tracing my sunset name.