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WHEN THE HOUSE CRAMPS IN ON US AND YOUR
BLACK AND WHITE CAT
Elizabeth Fogle

Sometimes I wait for you
in my small bathroom
of muted purples and greens.

Reclining in the tub
like David's Marat; but not
dead, no bloody wounds

turning my bath brown and red
and slick like oil while I
slump with a petition in my hand.

Not that at all. Just waiting.
Waiting for you to come home and
find me in dim candlelight

behind my closed door. I let my
hands float, cupped up towards
the low ceiling, watching the water

flood in and out of the low plain
of my palm. I notice a strand
of brown hair there, mine,

and know if you find me like this
I might be tempted later to write
of my sex and your sex and

the smell of it all on my fingers.
But then I'm afraid I'm growing old

when I think like this and realize

I won't be making love to you as we both
grow even older and even farther apart
and know finally what the change has become.

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I never told you that the morning after
Jackie died, I didn't want to leave you

because your skin was glowing golden
against the white sheets as you slept,

your back rising and falling with your
steady breathing. I think I did mention

I found the stray by the sidewalk again,
the one you've given a name,

eating a bird, his small, gray mouth
chewing through gristle and feather.

What I meant to say was that you are alive
and I am alive and so is the grass

which grows so quickly among the clover
that used to choke our backyard.

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Outside our small, brightly lit house,
the summer heat slows the city down
in beiges and browns and smoky grays.

A neighborhood dog barks and Rory

with the cherry-red coupe pumps his bass
loud enough to rattle the windows.

There, in the midst of too many words
and too little silence, I realize things
are easier to imagine when you give them

a name. And I wonder what name you will give
this feeling, this place as you button
your shirt and tie your shoelaces. And

I know like so many times before, you won't tell me
as your eyes crinkle into a smile and you laugh
at the clumsiness of it all. I know it amuses you

and your black and white cat when she lifts her chin
higher for you to scratch and dusk closes in
on our shining, cracked panes.