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The Lady Without A Dog

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Kaplan: The Lady Without A Dog

THE LADY WITHOUT A DOG

Sara Kaplan

Near the Lower East Side Tenement Museum,
on Essex Street, in the pickle district,

Guss's barrels of kosher sour, half-sour, quarter-sour, new
and spicy pickles, olives, sauerkraut, and pickled green tomatoes

bob in their juices while I stand in line in June and watch women's thick
white arms stretch and point. My eyes water from the city—

the women in front of me, their underarm garlic-scented sweat
staining their blouses, and saltwater hovering with the sour

fermented cucumbers while a man snaps into a fresh green one.
I carry loads of boxes of jars of pickles and olives

into the trunk of my car, and in that warm darkness, the pickles and olives
slosh through the Midtown Tunnel.

I came to the city only for the pickles—
to take them back to my basement, back to dolls and vinyl, dial

phones—all my obvious paraphernalia: unhooked and damaged.
Next to the water heater, I stare at the dust-stale-air soak in the scent of brine.