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Runge: On my knees, I salt the porcelain stains

ON MY KNEES, I SALT THE PORCELAIN STAINS

Justin Runge

On my knees, I salt the porcelain stains with abrasive and work against its rings, what's accrued, like a tree's, over years, a buildup of rust and of scum, the green-blue of copper that lolls from the faucet to the drain, the iron oxidized pale pink, this ugliness painted invisibly, minerals and bacteria that compose the bathwater left to blemish the tub for so long I scrub until muscles burn; the project of erasure is a physical one, as we've proven now over this week of defacing and refacing a home so many have occupied, filled with little scars, pins setting the fracture of a curtain rod, grafts of contact paper taking her days to apply to the leprous kitchen cupboards, because what hangs in these rooms is moisture, breathed in and bred without the vents or windows needed for escape, wet bending books, chewing paint off the walls, the ceiling scabbed by mold that has lived healthy above the bathers; I discover it over me like an ominous weather, like invasion, and am goaded into a last scour, gloves damp with the humidity of my hands, working for something, a blank slate, a clean bill, so she can soak after work.