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The House on 15th S. W.

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THE HOUSE ON 15th S.W.

Cruelty and rain could be expected. Any season. The talk was often German and we cried at the death of strangers. Potatoes mattered and the neighbors who came to marvel at our garden. I never helped with the planting, I hid in woods these houses built on either side replaced. Ponds duplicated sky. I watched my face play out dreams of going north with clouds.

North surely was soft. North was death and women and the women soft. The tongue there was American and kind. Acres of women would applaud me as I danced, and acres of graves would dance when sun announced another cloud was dead. No grating scream to meals or gratuitous beatings, no crying, raging fists against closed doors, twisted years I knew were coming at me, hours alone in bars with honest mirrors, being fun with strangers, being liked so much the chance of jail was weak with laughter, and my certainty of failure mined by a tyrant for its pale perverted ore.

My pride in a few poems, my shame of a wasted life, no wife, no children, cancel out. I’m left neutral as this house, not caring to go in. Light would be soft and full, not harsh and dim remembered. The children, if there are children inside, would be normal, clean, not at all the soiled freaks I had counted on.