1981

Years of This

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It’s like beginning small, the business is marriage. First they buy the sign and stack the shelves.
Her legs are long and cool as fluorescent lights.
She sits aglow at the cash register or with the adding machine in her lap.

People will buy anything sold in pairs.

Years of this and they buy real estate.
He builds the house and adds on and adds on. On the patio, the children wiggle their toes in wet cement, practicing the names they will die with.

She is still adding and subtracting, the lines in her palms do not lengthen or multiply. The wrinkle in her womb becomes the final namesake.

They started with nickels, dimes, animal hungers. First he mowed the lawn, she weeded. Then the gardener came three times a week.
Now from their condominium window a final geranium can be seen above traffic.
Its bloom tight pink like an infant’s fist behind glass.
They imagine their children returning, repentant. All of them religious and sad.