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Dominion

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Sometimes it seemed as if she did not live in the real world. She never put gas in the car. He took care of that, plus all the money, all the insurance. At night he listened to her talk about how she never had time to sew, or ride her bicycle, or do things she enjoyed. But other than those two things, what did she enjoy? She refused to play golf—something they could do together.

Her fantasy is she walks out of the house and leaves him with everything. She sees him rush about, taking care of the baby he had wanted so badly. It is hard to imagine the baby missing her, but she can hear her husband say the baby needs her. She can hear him begging her to come back when he is out of underwear and the baby is out of diapers. In the rest of the fantasy she lives alone. It is a rural, bare-bones existence. She makes one one-dish meal which lasts a week. She has no car and no insurance. She watches the sunset from her porch. She has a porch because she is lucky.

DOMINION

In the half of the shell
that had not fallen away,

angled like the palmiers in the bakery,
they could see the skinned elbow of the wing.

It showed enough blood to attract ants,
the ants, smaller than anything

about the bird, with its heart
looming.

The husband turned to his wife.
“I should kill it.”

With his foot held above the heartbeat,
as if he were taking a step,

the husband hesitated.
The wife used the toe of her sandal

to scrape the bird from the sidewalk
to the grass.

She swiveled the ball of her foot
hard into the ground.

After they heard the crunching shell,
the wife pressed her foot further into the grass.

The husband pulled her away
from where she stooped to look.

He felt ill, suddenly, and said so.
“Maybe I was wrong,” the wife said.

The husband replied, “To be eaten slowly
by ants, no matter what size you are,

no matter how young and pink,
can’t be pleasant.”

They laughed.
The wife pushed the husband forward

and fell against him.
He leaned back his head and laughed.

The wife gave him another push,
then ran ahead and grabbed his hand.

He tripped and fell against her.
She pretended to fall, then fell.

Walking towards the bakery, they talked of
business and how much work

they could expect in the next few months;
of the fifteen-year mortgage instead of thirty;

of how old their first child would be
when the second was born.