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Daughter like a Pendant

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X. J. Kennedy

DAUGHTER LIKE A PENDANT

Beautiful opal on a withered throat,
 distraction from a profile now laid waste,
 the gleam you cast so ignorantly chaste,
such polish in the study you devote

to mirroring her gestures. Futile scheme,
 and yet who'd blame her wish that we should see
 her slack chin blurred through your transparency?
Her sacrifice: ice milk now, not ice cream,

reducing wafers, Exercycles, gaunt
 mornings in sauna hells—brave tries to stem
 the sawtoothed nibble of the days. You, gem,
now are the single beauty she can flaunt.

Uneasily, you boost your bra, forgetting
 our surreptitious glances. Straps askew,
 you giggle at a punchline someone blew.
Already, dear, you loosen in your setting,

inviting theft. But still, who'd not applaud
 her thrust for inattention? You achieve
 what she desires—before, that is, you leave
and leave your wearer wistful for her gaud.