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The Giraffe

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Jon Davis

THE GIRAFFE

When the midnight phone rang,
my friend's voice kept trying
to say the word *hysterectomy*, that
one-word melody with ancestors
stalking the madhouses of nineteenth
century England. I was, of course,
moved, more by the simple
failure of elocution than the illness—
which was a factoid in a slick
magazine. Like learning that a giraffe
has seven neck bones, that a bat
will eat a ton of mosquitos
in an average year. *Hysterectomy*.
Abstract as a memo from the President
of Nocturnal Congestion. The dishes
shifted in their dishwater nest. The refrigerator
hummed its cryogenic folksongs.
The budgerigar honked and chattered
in its night-shrouded cage. I twirled
the phone cord around my finger
like a man twirling a phone cord
around his finger. The voice
in the telephone. The voice in
the telephone. I kept hearing
appendectomy, lobotomy, laparoscopy.
The sadness soaking into the words
like hand creme. The words thick with it,
bloated. Seven neck bones. Imagine.
Like you. Like me. But the miraculous reach.