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Envelope Addressed to Me with Your Return Address

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LAURA KASISCHKE

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The street we used to live on bore the name
of a man who had to be told one day by a stranger,
“Sir, sit down,” and then, “It seems
your son has fallen from a train.”

And our town was named
for the place in England from which
our founding fathers were forced
to flee one bloody day, so they
stuffed their traveling trunks with all
the shame they could take with them when they came
to this new place, where they would say, “Let’s
start all over here, but keep the same old name.”

And, although the wolf that mated with the mother
of the neighbor’s dog
in that shadow of the valley
of the shadows
was never seen again, Bailey

howls some nights exactly like
a very bad memory that I myself
had managed to repress, until now—

this businesslike envelope sent to my address, sealed
by the very tongue that once, so lovingly, uttered
a pet name I grew to hate. And

your name, too. *Your* name: The

darkest night of my life masquerading
for decades as a name.