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This Difference between Novels and Life

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Somewhere a novelist described a character as looking like a piece of plot, standing in a doorway; and now I think it’s the word “like”

that’s important there—this man at the door with his books and bread is no invention, not heading next for some succeeding chapter,

one near the end where he’s vehemently hugged by a woman who’s tailed him for a good hundred pages. No. He sits on the sagging couch,

eyes closed, and removes his shoes. Rattling the dark, train whistles rouse a chorus of neighborhood dogs, then the house stills around us.

This morning I saw laundry, left out overnight, swaying, starched by frost. Raking up a musty blanket of walnut leaves, I uncovered

a brilliant grass I thought out of place. But it’s not; this is California, December. What do I want for you, friend? Me

without history, attachments? A scene where, when you open the door, you’re greeted by love’s racket. Where is that house, that page?