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Song of the Secretary, Hot Lab

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Song of the Secretary, Hot Lab

All day in a concrete brick building without even one shaft of natural light, I learned to stare windows into my typing as my Selectric raced along at 74 words per minute.

Atomic symbols—Sr-90, Cs-137, I-131, U-238, Pu-239—darkened my work like birds tangled in the sky. But I fixed on clouds of my own bored making.

the small droplets of my idle thoughts, and I floated among them, oblivious to birds… while on the other side of the wall—beyond the photo of my kids and dog lined up in birthday hats—I don’t know why or when, a lab technician innocently moved a very important brick, and so a window opened over my desk, though I never saw its light. All the same, rays flooded in, and the shadow of those birds darkened my dosimeter, and later the mammogram of my right breast.