

Undercurrent
by Katrina Roberts

I'm twenty-seven feet tall, stretched across the yellow stubble of cropped stalks. The baby in his carrier peers out, kicks and coos. Two and a half months, young as a lima bean, strapped to my belly to walk Cottonwood Hill up past twenty acres of wheat, yellow eye that centers our loop. By next fall, fifty houses—slated to stand where now mown rows like gold corduroy stretch up to the foot of the Blues—will block this view.

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Scan the tar and weeds this morning: *short focus*, product of anger borne from Jeremy's tight-lipped goodbye, my "Hush the baby!" before light. Perhaps a full moon over the pasture, pale pinkish cloud beneath orange will have buoyed his spirits. He loaded his flatbed with boards and pipes, but then as he drove out, I heard them spill with a clatter onto the gravel, truck grind to a stop, then more tossing of metal; then it geared up again, climbed its stair of air and *blub-blubbed* off—expression of silent rage over factory work. I count his fingers when he returns each night.

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The baby mesmerized by my gait, memorizes the black-and-white checks inside his Swedish swaddle; I climb with the sun. Tomorrow a crew will come to dig in pipes for the subdivision, rerouting our walk. On Kendall Ridge, we follow long black wires down while a magpie and a small hawk spar for rank on looming poles; they dip and swoop crying *peeeeww, peeeeww*.

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My shadow, first erect on the dune, then, when the crest smooths, a streak of *purplegreyblack*, a smudge of self that Giacometti might make, or Modigliani paint, and... The car is almost upon us when I see: it swerves *not away*, but *toward*.

"F-- *you!*" I shout, shielding our eyes from grit.

"*And you, too,*" I curse the yellow dog (*teeth bared low guttural growl*) in the road where the hill flattens out. "*Get lost!*"

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A plane circles, crop duster, but I trust it won't fall from the clouds or drop anything on us; the hawk rides thermals above telephone lines, will probably dive, but for mice.

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Then, there in the lee in a fold of grass like a boat's wake: the housecat, cream and rust, seems to have run himself to sleep. But no, when I bend to look, no rise and fall. I turn my baby away, continue to walk. Here's the barn where they hang the sheep to skin at the season's end. Here's the creek where the bull ambled through one morning. And here's the left we take to lead us back up to the farm.

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Something's running through me and I'm not sure what.

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