

Pillow

by Claudia Smith

The sky was an over-bleached sheet, stretched to the point of ripping. Everything worn but clean. He was saying he'd be happier if we lived in Canada. The sun seemed very close, like a star at the top of a Christmas tree. Maybe I could pull it down. Our baby had died, but he didn't call it a baby. This was the year we lived on 32nd Street. That spring, I sprayed lavender water on our pillows. Groceries rotted in the back of the fridge, and we spent too much money at the diner. We had a black dog named Ivan, who curled up with me at night when he was gone. I thought about my baby and cried without relenting. Then, after a few weeks, I stopped. By then I'd lost my job. But I felt almost happy, outside, hanging our clothes to dry and looking up at the sky. Sheets fluttered.

"Makes me think of a bygone era," I told him. "Hanging out our laundry, that is."

"Yes, smells nicer this way," he agreed.

I thought we knew one another. I kissed his forehead. Then I went inside to sleep with the dog. He had a lion's mane and a nose like velveteen.

