this day before tomorrow

by Glynnis Eldridge

Back arching, spine twisted, muscles tense and turning. I am putting off my work. Jane Eyre is in the back of my mind whispering about childhood patriarchy and I am still clinging to images from dreams before waking; my last lover's face scrunched and emotional, sitting back in a pale blue plastic school chair, strumming a banjo quickly, eyes closed, singing. I woke up saying *I miss you* to my empty room. Back under my eyelids I sat across the room from him, next to someone who usually stands, screaming, at the front of the band, their eyes closed, hand on the microphone, mohawk flopping from one side of their head to the other. With my eyes closed, they sat next to me, saying, I like your leg tattoos, like this one, and this one, and this one, and this one, all of them, they're so cool, you're so cool, can you give me one? And I said, they're not tattoos, I just drew 'em last week and haven't showered for a while. This piercing (a muscle piercing, on my calf) I did myself! I can give you one too. And in my dream I did. We used a safety pin like the ones I used to hold black fabric together in New York when I was 12 and sad and quiet among friends. He tried to twist it after it had poked through one pore and came out another and was fastened. I said no don't, just let it be. He touched a blue ink bullseye on my thigh and said I like that one, give me one. In the back of the room there was a wall of windows that looked out at sunlit ocean, below the surface. Blue whales peered in.

Around noon after coffee and tea and oatmeal with yogurt, I go outside to rake leaves and grass cut and spit out by Mom's lawn mower, driven by David, her boyfriend of a long time now, at least four years. There are worms in the grass that move like snakes. They are quick and dodgy. They jump and slither and try to escape my rake by hiding in my shoes. I pull weeds out from between bricks, and with them I displace many bugs. There are white slugs and caterpillars and worms and centipedes and others I can't name. I sit crouched, peering down at the intricacies and the gentle movements in the uprooted soil. The lyrics of the song in my

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headphones says, don't save me don't save me don't save me. The bugs with legs are quick to find new places to go after being uprooted. The worms and caterpillar and slugs pull themselves in, coil around themselves, or slither quickly away. I put the ones who hide in their selves in my palm and move them to the garden with our kale and rhubarb. My palms smell like soil, like the earth again. The last time I had crouched like this and examined the bugs who keep things running so smoothly, was twenty years ago, when I would sink my hands into dirt to let snails and slugs crawl up my limbs. I hear the squeak of the door hinges moving, and in the doorway to the porch, Jack emerges. He is wearing his flat brimmed fancy straw hat with the ribbon around the middle. I pull my headphones off and he says languidly, *when you move into a house of your own,* (he pauses, and exhales, and continues) *cover your yard with concrete.*