

# The Virgin of Last Resort

*by Kathryn Kulpa*

In a little dirt church at the end of the world stands the ikon of an unrecognized saint. The virgin of last resort. The madonna of final appeal.

Her name is written in no holy book. She has no feast day. Yet still they find their way to her, the unwanted, the alone. Those who have prayed to every other saint in vain. They enter the town at night like the rains of summer that dry before the sun has risen in the sky. After the bar has closed, before the little street sweeper comes with his broom. Somewhere they find shelter and sleep, dreaming of prayers fulfilled.

In the glare of afternoon they enter her darkness, the unwanted, the alone.

She turns no one away. She grants every request.

Happily they leave her door, knowing they will meet their love at last.

Every morning the little street sweeper comes to cover the faces of the fortunate dead.

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