

# Rewind

by Sally Houtman

You can keep your bread and crackers. I don't need them. I will keep my whiskey. I will drink it in the study, TV on, volume down. In this house there are no voices, only echoes. There is only the sound of growing old.

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Days splinter. There are casseroles and strangers, Arrangements made with scoured phrases. There are dotted lines and perforations. Sign here. Initial there. Between, there is an elemental stillness. A wedding band. A broken wristwatch. ATV that broadcasts to an empty chair.

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On my shelf sits a stack of photo albums, catalogued and labelled volumes 1 - 9. I lift them down, run the pages between my fingers. I find her there in profile, arms folded, one hip jutting, right where I'd first placed her, midway through volume 3.

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I rise early, drink coffee by the window, gaze at nothing, lost in used-to-be. All this, and yet there are things I still believe in. I believe in Autumn gardens, jazz playing in the background, hair twisting round a finger, lips pursing, saying, *Yes*.

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I need time. That's what they tell me. With this I would agree. I need to grasp time, squeeze it tightly, and when I feel it slipping, when I grow weary of its passing, I need to stop it, hit rewind.

