Her Hair, a Braid

by Tina Barry

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Lips wavy in the chrome teapot's reflection, you mouth for-ty, slowly, and again, for-ty, as if it were a word discovered, not the years since your mother's death.

Would it help if I mention the boxes in the basement?
She's there, in a tin, loosely wound beneath sepia tissue paper, a braid to worry in your fingers.

I want to tell you I wore a coat today with a fur collar like your mother's mink pelts. Black and oily, they smelled of crowded ships and herring, wood smoke on snow.