The Kitchen Witch

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The Kitchen Witch

Your mother stays with us after the miscarriage. 
She flies out from her Louisiana kitchen to fix you. 
She makes you dress and wear lipstick. 
She sends me after holy water. She mixes it 
with her urine and your blood and dumps it 
in a bucket she’s filled with warm water. 
Then, she mops the floor, praying rosaries — 
Saint Francis Saint Thomas Saint Mary Saint Ann. 
I can hear her as she moves through the house, 
washing the baseboards, scrubbing our floors 
as though she could scrape away your pain in layers, 
as though she could scrape me from you.

I watch you rock in your grandmother’s chair, 
shipped out from the bayou. You stare at the 
glass angels your mother has hung from the ceiling. 
The dog in your lap licks the inside of your wrist. 
I try to make you eat, but you will only take 
cautious sips of the iced tea I offer you, and 
your lipstick makes the glass look kissed. 
I reach over the back of your chair to touch you — 
your hair, your heart, your breast, your neck — 
but your skin is as cool as those ice angels. 
Your mother mops around us, making an island 
of your rocking chair, and I dissolve into nothing 
but one hand, cupping, dry-rubbing a breast.

-Karen Piconi