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CHRIS DOMBROWSKI

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*October Suite*

Old dog October arrives  
half blind and wheezing,  
limping its track  
through ruts along the road.  
I want to be worthy  
of this waking dream:  
my mother, before my birth,  
kneads clouds at the counter.  
Floured, rain-scent thick  
as balm, they rise  
in the far room and feed  
no one. My father  
walks the market, buys  
hollow loaves, calls them  
little worlds, little nothings.  
First hike after the fires,  
grasshoppers black  
as burn. *Go on, hopper,  
fly away somewhere.*  
In the trees the scorched  
knots look like people  
clutching one another.  
Tighten your purse strings,  
my mother used to say,  
your mouth is what you spend.  
We have to learn to treat  
each other as if a music  
were barely playing,

to go to bed dusty  
like unlit chandeliers,  
to sleep, and sing the songs  
any words would ruin.  
We each imagine it arriving  
in a different season.  
I used to think: December,  
a windless day, bouncing  
along the river bottom until  
a deadfall snags me,  
swings me under  
a shelf of ice. . . . But this  
is the only time of year  
and this the only cloud:  
it sweeps the sky like a sheet  
snapped from a clothesline.  
We stand beneath  
the burial of this light  
lifting hands to whatever  
we lift hands to. And like a tack,  
the near-full moon pins  
a black note to the ridge.