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KEVIN CLARK

Autumn, 1830. Her  
Letter to Dead

James. Since last

the seasons have changed  
the farm. The magpies  
take to the peppers, the wild  
cats fatten with field mice and feed  
from the barn. My strawberries  
are spreading

with such felicity!

The drought coughed up its last  
windstorm some two months ago

and you know

we do not have to dust the china  
every day. This moment, Margaret my sister  
coughs from a real cold—  
no hacking now from the dreadful summer  
mote.

The modest bears promise:  
our winter crop is planted

and all

that remains is the watching, mounds  
curled to the walnut tree. I marvel  
at them whenever: from the kitchen window  
washing dishes, cooking, from the bedroom  
sewing the infinity quilt  
(yes, still! still!).

Often we both find  
ourselves staring from these back windows,  
studying the completeness

of rain.

A stranger might think we seemed satisfied,  
nothing more, hopes stammering



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Your blank visage  
did not compromise his leap to your seat, nor  
the shove he gave you to the ground. I will  
never forget his wicked turn  
from the culvert, James,  
nor the awful punch  
up side your head to send you sprawling  
again. I hated him.

And I tell you this: I  
was angry at you, we were not children, and  
I was angry because you would not rise.  
Such submission!

Forgive me. But you are gone

and I must tell you (yes, I am guilty  
of lying!) how I loved  
you, how I could not at all  
love you after this,  
such drought! And  
to think you were the best  
of men. Now

Margaret calls. An image of winter  
hones her voice: we are chopping  
wood, and it is my

turn.