Noise

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There is no noise, they say, must have imagined it.
And they pad back to bed, drop their robes,
slip in next to the person beside them.
Must be the dishwasher, they say. The buzz
of the halogen porch light. The neighbor’s AM radio
left on in the garage. One night it is the heater,
apother the extra freezer downstairs.
Where is that noise coming from? they think.

Most nights they don’t know they’re searching
for a noise to turn off. They’re just walking
in their soft robes, without shoes, walking
slowly for the only time in their day, moving
from room to room and looking and then
giving up and falling asleep. Did you
sleep well last night? someone will ask.
Yes, they’ll say, and mean it.
I can hear the noise. It wakes me at night. Catches me while I’m driving, perks my ear. I go to turn it off. I stand at the sink and stare at the greenness of the grass and try to turn it off. I shuffle dishes, sweep, mop, put in a load of laundry. I get in the car and drive somewhere where everything is affordable. I rub my husband’s arm and ask him questions he can’t answer. I turn on the television, kick off my shoes and point the clicker at the set.

I know where the noise is coming from. It is not the bug light. It is not the dishwasher. It is not the hot water heater. I try to lower the volume for myself. I make a sandwich. I stand at the kitchen sink and stare at the grass and hear their footsteps all around me, the pad pad padding of slippers, the creaking and shuffling of night clothes and sleeplessness. The prickly fuzz and leak of their story running on and on.