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Noise

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NOISE

Ginger Adcock Hendrix

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,
another 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. 