

RISHMA DUNLOP

## Hush

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All winter in stucco on 65th I learned to love  
what couldn't speak: what began in milk and  
blood. Baby, cat, the man who worked long weeks  
away from home. Forty below.

Snow stiff trees burlapped against processions of  
storms. I shoveled walks, nursed the baby, fed the cat.  
Waited for the man I was slow to love.

Sometimes I'd ride the bus to the bistro,  
only place in town that served espresso—  
let it flow bitter down my throat—

the owners were Czech brothers in white shirts and black  
trousers. They knew all about the baby, the cat, the man  
I was slow to love.

At home, in silence, I folded laundry, changed diapers,  
fed the cat, watched backyards fill with snow.

In spring, I woke, my mouth pressed to your back—  
you—whom I was slow to love.

I never wrote about us, your arms around the baby,  
around me, sealed into cracked plaster with a kiss.