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It's still noon, I say. You laugh, chest heaving, light falling like rain onto your face. *It always feels that way*, you reply. I want to remember you like this: face moon-tinted, ripe with joy. You and everything you left behind: dresses with the tags still attached, birdfeed left unscattered, four chambers of the stillest heart. A body too loud to be contained by bruise and bone. A body unnatural in its stillness and why this body, I wonder, which was strong enough to carry old desires and the fruit of motherhood and booming laughter, why fail now? Like the wings on an airplane or the hands of a caregiver, things engineered to fly or die trying. The closest thing to prayer I know is my hands, your hands, learning to be patient. *It's too early*, I want to say.

Somewhere, a bird sings. *It always feels that way*.

It always feels that way.

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