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Searching for a New Word

by Bobbi Lurie

Dear ones, how ominous it is to be sitting here with you
on this imploded Thursday, our destiny bent to the new conditions,
our destiny folded into fourths, stored in the pocket of the man,
his breath hot upon our necks.

The program has gone awry, we can't savor our selections any longer,
the slaves are getting restless,
there are citizens on the hill
who have traveled all night to escape the tyranny.

There are strangers on the grass with their jackets torn
who notice the grass is fake, man-made, created by the worried of suburbia
whose ideas of beauty vanished
in one of the last past wars.

Isn't it strange that my arms are a pale shade of "flesh,"
that once-Crayola color.
Isn't it strange that I am covered with my mother's body
like a worn-out coat, the fabric tattered in places.

Look beyond my finger, press the word "freedom" to your lips,
emboss it in the sepia-stained book stored on the top shelf.
Last night I dreamt of bankers and lawyers surrounding me
in a clean white room. I have terrible dreams.

I make plans to survive my hatreds
but this room is so cold,
this room is so large,
there are indelible marks on my mind.

There are clay spaces pressed into my palm.
I feel them when I point my finger,
transfigured by the steeples in the distance
and that terrible word, "History."

