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Trash

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Trash

By Eleanore Lee

To find where the Johnsons used to live,
You have to turn up the old dirt road,
Hang left, then go on past the splintered gate
Of the town dump
(You'd drag your bags of trash out of the trunk or down from
the truck bed
And just leave them on top of the pile).
My mother didn't like me going to their house.

It was farther up that road, near the rocks.
Hard to miss.
The empty, ruined barn,
The wrecked Chevy in the front.
Denise and I'd climb in and pretend to drive.
In the kitchen, usually a small, pale child or two
Underfoot.
I liked to work the hand pump in their sink.

Flowered linoleum in their front sitting room.
Their dad's cigar butts in the rusty can on the sideboard.
The inside toilet didn't flush, so you had to use the john out
back
On up past the wandering chickens.
We had hideouts in the woods,
And we built a fort behind the woodpile.

They're gone now.

Chip spent some time in jail, and then he left the area.
Denise got pregnant in tenth grade.

The lot's been up for sale a long time.
They're gone.
Stuff though. It stays.
The dump's shut down, but
People still sneak their junk in after dark.

The rotted cardboard boxes: Mountains of them
Huge wet bags of dripping rotten tomatoes

Offal

Beer cans: Schlitz and Bud
Mail, unopened
Red shorts with the seat worn through

The pile of single socks
Dog food cans
Dead lightbulbs
Wet clumps of cut grass
Pond scum
Squashed possum
Empty vacuum cleaner bags, cloth diapers
Fanta bottles
Torn birthday paper and ribbons
Canceled checks.

It's still around—
Not shredded stacked or sorted
Just there.
Earth coat of many colors.