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Sudden Husbandry

William Powley

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Sudden Husbandry

by William Powley

In her white apron, she calls:
“Come.” Plates soak gray.

Her language this time
I cannot accept. She scrubs

dishes the way pebbles
shake in wood maracas,

asking me, “rinse
the knives, forks, and spoons.

Dry with a towel.”
I dream to rattle castanets

over white paper, sounding out
a poem’s rhyme and meter

while her fingernails chip away
the dried lasagna skins.

“It won’t take long.”
In my mind I play

yellow rubber mallets
on white lined timpani,

tap silver-chrome chimes,
or graze a gong with my elbow,

working through a stanza.
She calls me from words,

the new marimba music I write.
“Come to the kitchen.”

My cheeks twitch. Dish hands
on a page quiver and fall.