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the vagrant

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the year of my twelfth birthday, my mother's skin turned grey-ish blue
her supple body slowly concaved,
and she lay supine in bed, fixated on the whirring fan above

hushed tones rose from the TV room, kissing me goodnight instead of her
i would get out of bed in the blackness and press cheek to carpet,
deciphering this new language that had invaded our sanctuary,
had taken up residence without permission

vomit, languor and tears were daily upstairs visitors,
in the kitchen casseroles multiplied.

my mother retreated into veiled rooms

Cancer filled her abdomen, permeating the farmhouse with toxic fumes
some days he poked at her vocal chords for pleasure,
her speech garbled with confusion
on others, Cancer begged me to spare some change

on those days, i mounted my sedentary basement bicycle and pedaled for hours.

and when my mother came downstairs,
i leapt into a heap of broken, browned leaves
and opened eyes to light streaming through the canopy above
laser beams nudging my freckled face.