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SALT

Nothing happened that night:
My son didn't call, stranded on the highway
in a shattered neighborhood I didn't know.
My daughter did not scream at me.
The laundry did not move from its basket
into the washer, empty, ready, waiting.
The oak tree did not hit the house in the wind.

Nothing happened when I went outside
in the rain and sat, waiting
for my husband to turn off the light in his study.
There was no breaking news story – no dead prime minister,
no words from the unconscious coal miner,
no suicide on the block.

I sat out there, thinking about the red cranberry juice
spot on my tablecloth, how it reminded me of spilled wine,
Bordeaux stains from the wine my father drank each night
at dinner when I was little.
I wondered if the bottles of Gallo would be as heavy
to me now, as weighty as when I was eight, carrying them to his side.
He kept them in my mother's laundry room, behind the washer.
Now, I could be washing the whites, the tablecloth,
but I remained outside, thinking about the salt we used to pour
on the spilled wine to absorb the stain.
I wonder what blemishes
my children will one day salt.