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Bedside Manner

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BLAIR HOBBS

Bedside Manner

Through the curtain-drawn picture window
I watched ruby throats bullet

past maidenhair trees. They fought
for the feeder's plastic nipple, a nectar drop.

Once, when I was not spying, a hummingbird
tried swooping into the house, our still life

of flowers with wisteria-trellised
wallpaper and the sofa's needlepoint roses.

I was in a fevered sleep and woke
to the glass thud. My tendriled hair

was damp against my neck and my heart
fluttered, caged. Mother

entered my room and her hands cradled
an alate gift. Tattered feathers,

talons curled like eyelashes, its scarlet throat
was a queen's scalloped collar.

When she flattened her palm
the bird's wings opened like my doll's fan

and circumscribed the span
of its painted bisque face.

In the violet light
of breeze-swollen curtains

mother held the ruby throat
as if she were holding one of her garden's

camellias. Another glory clipped at the stem
and withering in her touch.