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First

I have to die first, you say. When we met  
we called in sick, ate in bed, let dishes and dust  
collect. Blossoms confettied out-  
side. We were like foals, newly testing

our skeletal limbs. I have to die first,  
you say, the woman who stopped eating  
when the dog died, as though feeling  
your flesh wasn't yours, or didn't exist

anymore. So you think I'm the strong  
one, the one who can stand being left.  
Me, the one who, alone in the house, dusts  
the furniture, the remainders of our long

departed skin. The one who wipes the ghost  
of our fingerprints from the mirror, who  
washes our scent from the sheets, who  
rinses the spoon that touched the moist-

ness of your tongue. When we were in bed  
last night we imagined how we'd go. Our  
favorite: I'm 100, you're 104.

Our hearts stop, just stop, gently, you said,

in our sleep. At exactly the same moment.

But we know there are likelier fates.

I have to die first, you say. And it's late,  
it's late. We're drifting off, even as you say it.