

*Laura Kasischke*

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## Housekeeping in a Dream

The sky is a piece of mind  
outside the kitchen window, the dishes  
the dirt. My mother whispers  
how to do it  
in my ear *make a list, make  
a meal that will last  
all week on Sunday, lie  
to your husband, fry onions in butter until  
they're soft and invisible as worms, vacuum  
like it matters so much of our flesh  
is flaking away diffusing  
like pink light  
through powdered milk* and wind  
roars down the hallway, knocks  
the house plants to their knees.  
Her photo on the wall smiles  
at my broom—my back—snapped  
so long ago  
she isn't even ill. I nail  
a cup and saucer  
to the kitchen table for her:  
a permanent place. She stands  
outside the kitchen window, barefoot  
on a crust of snow, touches  
her bald white head with her fingers and cries.  
I open the freezer and stare at the frost for a while, until  
my face flushes white, and my neck—my hair  
turns gray  
and blows away  
and a younger woman brings  
my groceries  
in brown paper bags over

the children's faces. Now  
I can only see their eyes  
through the holes they have scissored  
to escape me.  
There was a meal of dusk  
and love I should have made  
but it's too late. I take a lover for something  
to lie to my husband about  
and forget the rest. I'm sleeping  
when my family comes back.

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## Pall

Because my mother was too beautiful  
as a girl she died young and made  
a horrible corpse. Her female friends backed

off from the coffin  
which was quilted  
in satin and flashed  
its glamorous hinges at them. Frost

scarved the pallbearers, their gasps  
and sighs turned to shreds  
of white chiffon across her grave. The one

who'd made love to her once  
or twice, took  
my hand in his after  
he lowered her into the dirt. *She*  
*was lovely* he said, and his hand

wasn't warm but I wanted  
to kneel down and let him push