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## American Husband

Wayson, Kary

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## HEAD OF A GIRL

A boy presses one knee on his sister's ribs, spits  
and sucks and spits again.

The father in another room holds headphones  
on his red ears, country music  
loud enough for the girl to hear.

When the wife touches his shoulder  
he aims for an eye, spits  
and he hits it. She walks away, calls the kids  
cuts four steaks on white plates and sits.

Just like that: the mother drops the girl  
on the edge of town.

The girl presses against a twin bed,  
tracing the ribs on a pale strange bedspread.  
Her aunt says God won't give you more than you  
can take.

Nothing. Not even water that week.

Years: a desert, the grandmother  
dies. There's the bird  
the girl starves and buries in a coffee can,  
a man, his thermos of gin, twin

hospital beds under thin ribbed spreads  
guarded by brick bridge rails.  
She scrapes her name in water

on a wet step and forgets it. No matter  
what weather, she keeps her fingerprints  
pressed inside a pair of gray gloves.