Owl Question

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This was the summer I folded shirts in a shop where the lights were as bright as the flames of hell. I lived on an island off an island and every village had an Indian name. It was June and, come October, I would marry a man so many states away I could not remember the heat of his skin. I thought of Indians when I accepted rides from strangers: smiling my way into foreign cars, hoping foreignness would bring me back to myself or open the box I kept drawing around my life. Maybe an Indian reasoned this way when he offered his hand to we who would rob him of everything? This was the summer my friends stopped calling, by chance, all of them poor and out of love. It seemed love was intended for no one: I could not remember a season when I was lifted by its salt as if by an ocean. Each time the phone rang the man I was months from promising my future to would light up like a fire fly then, quickly, vanish into dark. I suppose I wanted to hold him, as if in a mason jar, and watch the movements of his wings. Nights, bodies of flies pressed against my bedroom window, I looked for a name or a meaning to give anything. Why was I born and why did I stand all day in a hot shop folding shirts? Who was the man I agreed to marry? Why did I want him until I was raw with wanting and why did I go on wanting long after I willed myself to stop? Why did he never say he could not live without me? Why did he never cry: his hands unable to reach my body, our lives so short? I didn’t know that marriage was a war for territory: families giving up beloved children, the walk to the place you make home like a trail of tears. When I was twenty-five I wanted love to save me: a costumed dance and a name for the way I was related. I didn’t know I would never have a name for so many things that mattered, would never belong to anyone other than myself.