Where She Always Was

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PERSONAL EFFECTS

1
For once not arguing,
we divide among ourselves
the things she left: her mother’s mother’s
swan brooch, her pilled and odorless
brown coat, sturdy Timex,
the night shirt she mended
with clashing thread.

2
The morning before, I sat
by my mother’s bed
to ask her what she would like
the paper to say about her
life. It was like being read a story
backwards, the reader becoming
the child afraid to fall asleep.

3
With the shift nurse helping
and some baby oil, and trembling
the way he did the day he slipped it on,
my father bends over
the quieted body I thought I saw breathe,
and slides off her wedding ring.