

Having an MRI/Waiting for Laundry

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I am wondering how a childhood that seemed almost miserable at times can be looked back upon with such an aching love for even the smallest detail. Because the noise here inside the MRI machine is so common, so familiar, that within seconds I am leaning against the wall near the back door of my mother's house, circa 1975, listening to the green Maytag spin. The breeze does not circulate mechanically through a close, bright tube; it wafts through the open door hung with flowered curtains my mother sewed herself in the room across from mine, and they are so lovely I am afraid to touch them. It is 1975, so my father is already dead but not my grandmother, and with my eyes closed I feel her moving through the house behind me, smoothing sheets, waiting. It is 1975, so my brother may already be smoking pot in some local basement but could then run up the steps and home for dinner, having still his childhood and all his limbs. It is 1975, so I have never been in love or made love to, never almost died from cancer, never married, never carried and bore my son, never had this MRI. It is 1975 and I am twelve in a house I know so well I can tell you—that cupboard?—left to right, bleach, silver polish, Bon Ami, a china dish filled with slivers of still-good soap. It is 1975, and I am just a girl waiting for laundry, trying to help her mother. Then the nurse cuts in over the speaker to tell me I am finished just in time: because I tell you, I am certain, that in a few more seconds that bell would have rung, as clear as the sunlight through the open door, telling me the cycle was over—and that sound, circa 1975, would surely have stopped my heart. ∞