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GOLD WAKE PRESS, 2008

AN ABRIDGED VERSION FOR THE MODERN READER

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When the clock strikes three, she wanders each greenish room, dusting lampshades and long oval mirrors. Even the neighbors recall the morning her preparations began, the chill in the air, the first few guests. That was when the fog set in, its pearls glistening on every red geranium.

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Yet the windows still rattle with a burgeoning storm. After the incident, visitors left blown umbrellas blooming like tulips throughout the hall. And her sister had even forgotten the gold cigarette case, with its gleaming hinges and enamel portrait of the Queen of France.

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Then the pendulum clock fell out of fashion, leaving only crickets to mark the hour. Her house began to echo with the sound of the old music box, winding like a gyre in the dark green room.

ENNUI

You walk past a crystal decanter glistening near the harpsichord. Since our guests left for the ocean, with its dark enclaves and low mumbling, the lakes have done nothing but rain. And our dim halls become more cavernous every evening. When I ask why the rooms buzz with damselflies, you merely nod your head.. The shutters blow open and closed. Our parlor hums like trees shifting before a storm.

CANTATRICE

He recalls painting the second story rooms, hearing a neighbor croon Tosca from below.. As the lady sings, light in her hair becomes a constellation, its points aligned in the pale November sky. He taps his brush and crows fly out to meet her, flapping their hollow-boned wings. She sways from east to west. When the clock chimes, his halls loom blue above him. The woman sings and sings.

THE BOOK OF MUSIC

She remembered the book from her prior home, with its damselflies and its blue shutters. And she recalled a passage from within the book, describing the sound of a cello: ...*the hollow mumbling. A hum like the cold that undoes one's teeth in winter and rattles the gums.* Those mornings she thumbed through its pages, listening. The shutters flying open as though they were wings. Some nights, she slept in a room with crystal dishes and harpsichords. She dreamed the movement between octaves in electric light.

THE SWAN

Since the leaves have changed, they've done nothing but shiver on bright yellow stems.
And a dead swan still floats in the river, luminous among the undulating vines. I sit near
the edge of the water and wait. When will the miracle begin, its light rising with June
bugs into the greenish sky?