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The Emperor's Cut

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The Emperor's Cut

Rose Postma

When I see my life as it should be, Sunday afternoon's vegetables
are peeled and sliced, waiting under water in glass bowls
on the kitchen counter. There are no early morning trips
to the ER because there is lunch to be made. I had wanted to struggle
with this baby, sacrifice my body on an altar of pain, let death
or at least its foretaste run rip shod through my veins because
you are never closer to death than when facilitating life. But when
his, my, our placenta starts to separate from the uterine wall,
I am strapped to a sterile pyre and pushed into a numb river. Even
Caesar's birth (contrary to legend) was not mediated by a surgeon,
with thin latex gloves pressing on unresponsive flesh. His mother
was allowed to suffer and surrender in an empire where a baby
could be cut from a dead mother's body so as to avoid burying
a pregnant woman. I am unfeeling as the scalpel unzips my skin
right above the pubic bone, separating muscle, organ, tissue. I have to be
told to gasp when he is plucked, twisted from me—a small, unripe plum.