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212 Sewell Street
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Ugly is a cheap drug and she'll build a tolerance for it. The fact that every kid on her street wears a dirty shirt makes it easier to wear her own, and the cemetery where the block ends is her first glimpse of the horizon. She and the kid from 211 race for it every day. Her three-legged dog has marked every tombstone. That boy in 211 has such red hair, she imagines he's always hot, his head burning like the red end of the match. He is covered in freckles, too. Even his teeth are freckled. The boy from 207 has white hair that is so fine it hurts her like everything beautiful. Stay away from 207, her father says; he's odd, her mother says. She sees him in the way his hair ends in a perfect curve around his ear. 214 can do the best bicycle tricks but his thumbs are huge and misshapen. He eats chalk rock every day. Calls it superdust, believes it will make him stronger. She exhales only at night when she is alone in her room. When the house groans dark, she presses her nose to the window screen, tasting the metal with her tongue, looking for lights, learning to breathe when no-one else is watching.