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## **The Garden**

Muted orange quietly crept into the sky, announcing the end of the day. A woman noticed this as she sat on a stone bench in her garden, between the tomatoes on their trellis and her bushes of deep pink roses. Two pots of lavender and one of rosemary were at her feet. Her gray tabby cat limbered around the corner of the house and down the stepping-stones to where the woman sat. Through the kitchen window she could see her husband at the table, sipping coffee from a mug. How he can still sleep at night, she thought, I will never know.

Orange gave way to violet and violet to navy blue, and the air grew riddled with little cuts of cold. When she started to shiver, the woman rose, dusted off her skirt, and scooped up the cat. Warm air and soft yellow light from the bulb in the ceiling fan greeted her as she opened the back door. The cat lept out of her arms and darted down the dark hallway. The linoleum countertop was neat, almost bare, except for the half-full coffee pot. Her husband always made two cups' worth, even though she never had coffee past noon.

You've spent a lot of time in the garden, her husband said, in response to his wife's appearance. Well, yes, she replied. The flowers and the vegetables make good company. To them, there is no world. A tomato knows nothing of the pandemic, or the economy, or the president. It's comforting to sit with them and almost not know it myself.

I see, said her husband, I understand the sentiment. But what a danger, to know nothing of the world. I thank God that I know — when I know, I am prepared; I avoid vulnerability. What a horror, not to notice.

The woman opened the cabinet and took out a green mug. She filled it with the coffee from the pot and took the seat across from her husband, setting the mug on the faded, checkered tablecloth. Then again, what harm can a break do, said her husband.