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FAMILIARS

They all laughed, as at a familiar joke,
but to me it seemed an inconsequent
burst of ill will.

I paused, hesitant at the doorway,
assessing the likely sympathy of the group —
perhaps as evaporable as remembered words
that had brought me home.

Only Jane, stone-blind in her sewing corner,
offered a smile,
but Gordon held tight to her hand.

The room was alight from uneven, white candles
ranked down the center of the long oak table.
I saw that no one was missing
and my post card was tacked to the window.

I set my bag down inside the door sill,
and I turned to hang up my coat on a peg.
A sweet, familiar odor lodged in the air.
"Don't anyone go to any trouble," I said.
"It's only me."

— Knute Skinner

County Clare, Ireland