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## THE FIRST WINTER WINDS

—*Lesvos*

The sea whips out the first winter winds  
 which sweep up sand into clouds. In a week  
 the tourists will leave and the road to the village will be deserted  
 enough for a few stray dogs and me. The wind has begun  
 to rattle the sign at the butcher, to carry drops of sea like a cold  
 hand. I am beginning to know life on the island in winter,  
 though it is only fall, though the women will kneel in the olive grove  
 for hours in weeks, and the men will shake the branches to release the  
 fruit. The tourist shops are shuttered tight. And the young Greek men  
 have returned to Athens. I no longer hear English in the *platia*.  
 Stray cats, frantic for scraps, scurry from chair to chair while packs of dogs  
 scamper  
 along the road without fear of what's coming. When we sit with the  
 kerosene heater  
 lit, holding our coffee or tea, we are almost in a huddle, the *trahanás* dry in  
 the cupboard,  
 the wine jugged under the sink, olives piled in containers. The chickens  
 cluck  
 outside the bedroom window and the rooster that was somewhere else this  
 summer  
 has returned with his loud racket. It is obvious we are poised for survival.  
 It is obvious when the ferries stop coming from the mainland, when the  
 newspapers  
 stay old. It is obvious when a neighbor invites me to the fields to scavenge  
 for olives, her legs covered with black stockings, her dress layered in wool, her  
 head  
 kerchiefed, like a tight-skinned olive. It is obvious when I feel uneasy,  
 resist  
 the village cloth, the subordinate stance in the fields. I'd rather climb the tree,  
 wield  
 the long stick, wait for my food to be served at dinner, and then join the  
 men at the *kafenión*, oblivious to me.