

MENSTRUAL

The pain comes at work while slicing
milky lettuce ends

their chalk blood
beading. At first not hurt exactly

but a spinal silence over the usual
sloughing and glurping

portent of something mustered
nothing you'd

regularly notice, filling
the sink with tepid water

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snapping contused romaine leaves
at the stem. Some shift;

the gut glooms
like a distant sound, a dog's howl

shut up in a trailer, an echo
of the organs calling their stockbroker

calibrations across the emulsified
deep. Loosen your belt, breathe the wilt

smell of winter lettuce. Take
again the knife

and move it carefully over vegetables
crisp and seeping, your movements all

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query and creeping, until the first
split knuckled arrival

which breaks in your center and washes
over every striving thing.

You crouch with a sound outside
of language, you brace against the cooler

door. You pacing, you swaying,
you maroon the lettuces—

a co-worker gathers you into her car.
The pain comes with its own heartbeat,

hollows the body, makes a vacancy,
leaches blood from the fingers

such that they tingle and fasten
together as claws.

The sleep that comes
after, a fleecing, a web you're caught in;

you could no more wake
than rise from the dead.