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Probation

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PROBATION

The cheap dropped ceiling
jumped like a pot-lid boiling
when our upstairs neighbor
chased his girl that winter.
Falling out of

summer's skimpy tops
she'd want our phone. Her plush lips
creased. Not exactly blonde,
but *luteous*, we thought,
pleased the right word

was there for that shade
of slightly slutty mermaid.
Wincing, we'd hear him punch
along the floor on crutch-
es, a giant

bat trying to mince
a mayfly. Sex and violence
you called them; Blondie with
Dagwood on crystal meth,
I'd tell our friends

over dinners stewed
in noise. Even his truck cowed.
Black, smoked glass, outsized wheels
flaunted like chrome knuckles
we shrank from, ducked,

afraid we'd find her
later, knocking at our door.
Some nights we waited through
like captured prey. To you
I'd turn in bed,

saying the furtive
words against your back, *I love*
... You'd stroke my hair, or hip,
all our years the same flip
crack, *I do, too.*

Averill Curdy is Visiting Assistant Professor in Writing at Grand Valley State University. Her poems and criticism have appeared in many journals, most recently *Poetry*. She is editor of the forthcoming Longman Anthology of Poetry.