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SUGAR: A BLUES

DJ and Daniel cuddled on the bed two weeks ago
serenading each other with Monica's lyrics: *You's a ho,
you's ho, a sideline ho*. Back then there was still sweetness

in the kitchen and when he tried to kiss his mother
she replied *You just want to sugar up to me
so you can get some of my candy*

but today it's *Don't play me!* and *Go get me a goddamn
Mountain Dew!* because it's Mother's Day and almost
noon already and under the red hood of her sweatshirt she's

racked with a wicked case of the shakes—no soda
to be found at her sister's house. The kids are yelling
When we gonna eat, Ma? so she and sister and

baby girl run to the store to fetch that stuff
and there is no man yet in sight except for the young thugs
who are gathering on the corner as if it were

a hot piece of change. They eat chips and smoke loosies
hoping that love or money will jump through their doors
but for now the only promise of good things to come

are the rows of hot dogs pickling on the cold grill.
They drive up Hoosick Street to the Save-A-Lot,
which DJ says is where the poor people shop,

and here in this dazzling ghetto of off-brand food,
rows of junk fluoresce to blaze under rainbows
of colored plastic as her sister throws in as much

potato salad, white buns, dollar chips, and generic
cola that DJ's food stamps can buy. In the parking lot,
the Dunkin Donuts drive-thru calls the girls

and when the server's voice thrills through the speaker,
DJ's sister shouts *Gimme an Old Fashioned
and two Boston Kremes and a coffee extra extra*

light and extra extra sweet and finally
after hours of longing for some
sugar in her bowl every woman here

is sated and DJ yells *Goddamn!* out of her
window at every tight-panted man
she passes on her fine way home.