

The Ladies

When Mom and Mae got old
and both their men were dead
we moved the pair in Mom's house,
split the rambling maze of halls
and rooms into a sort of duplex,
dead-ending halls into closets,
cutting doors in walls, dividing
the place into two halves, separate,
but equal, right down the middle,
so each sweet lady would have her
privacy. We prided ourselves in
knowing that *our* splitting of the races
was actually equitable, each side
with nearly the same square footage,
each with its own same-size bedroom
and identical bath, complete with sink,
toilet, tub, just different colors—
one pink, one green. Each duplex
even had its own T.V. room, the kitchen
being their only common space.
Yet after all the pricy remodeling,
the opening of this and closing of that,
every day when I'd visit after work I'd find
the retired clerk and her former maid
in Mom's den in side-by-side recliners,
the old bluebird and the cardinal
washed colorless as sparrows by the soaps.

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