

## Two-Family House

Jen DeGregorio

My landlord's dead wife  
must have excellent credit  
she keeps getting mail. This bank  
will give her five hundred dollars  
for opening now. This bank offers zero  
interest until the following year. This store  
sent a booklet of coupons. She can buy  
a new couch with no money down.  
She can lie there all night bleeding  
change to the cushions until  
they pay for themselves. Maria Duarte, I  
watch your husband. How he tends to our lot,  
its lawn made of rocks surrounded by chain link  
these few blocks from the train to New York.  
In the corners he places small statues: a girl  
in a bonnet. A smiling frog. And an aloe plant  
near the front door, where it bends  
toward its ration of light. I've seen him  
take a scissor to it, squeeze out  
its syrup he rubs on his palms  
as he sighs. Closes his door. John  
and me, we have an agreement. I'm in charge  
of taking in mail. It's my job to sort it,  
take what's mine, place what's his  
on the step. Some days Maria  
gets more mail than John. Some days John  
gets no mail at all. I leave it all on the step.  
John's mail gets taken. Maria's  
collects. I keep thinking maybe today  
he'll take it. I keep thinking, does he want me  
to take it? Put what's hers

in the trash he drags each week  
to the curb. That's his job,  
our agreement. Does he want us  
to switch? I don't ask. I wear socks  
in the rooms I inhabit above him. I take off  
my shoes at the door like he asks, climb  
the narrowing path.