TEOW LIM GOH

Housekeeping

—Rock Springs, Wyoming, November 1875

No matter how much she scrubs the floor, the dust returns, a fine silver on every surface in the house. We live in a dugout, dear. It’s pointless, John tells her, but she cannot stop—it is not proper for a woman to live in such a mess.

These days he hardly comes home for dinner, staying out late in the union hall and—she knows—stopping by the saloon for a pint or five after talking all day about how much longer to strike. There are only so many ways she can make their pantry last.

She counts how much she owes the store, how much for flour, for eggs, maybe some roast for Sunday—no, that was only a girlhood dream, like the dream that he would put his hands on her breasts, two fingers missing.