

—+ **JANET A. BAKER** | Halloween Dream

My sister is teaching me to make the plaster cast
that holds up my father. It must be poured every day
and applied by a daughter. She passes the job to me.

The cast covers the front of his body,
around one side, and part of his face.
We can't decide if we are keeping him alive

or keeping the illusion of aliveness,
propping up a corpse to stand in the world
like a prosthetic self. My sister says,

"See, this is how you attach his arm,"
and his arm is skinny and limp. Sometimes a little life
moves in the right eye. I keep checking for it.

There is no question that our work as women
is to present this man as someone standing.

There is no question that our work as women
is to hold up the world, present ourselves standing,
armoured, checking for life.