

Up, Down

She comes on Wednesdays. I run
the elevator. The cage clatters shut.
We latch too, with almost private smiles.

I pull the crank handle, palm-
polished for decades, deep
dark and shiny as her eyes.

Cables engage and lift. Voltage
thrums between us, seven stories
up. I open the gate. She gets off.

Gravity brings me back to ground
alone. Flashbacks of the climb roll
like credits through the windows in the door.

Fantasia Lesson from Mickey Mouse

Lured by claims of strong magic, I strike
a bargain. Now the Android owns me.

Spellbound, lost in caves of my own making,
enslaved by sorcery beyond my ken,

caught in my ambition to know more
than I have studied, loath to take essential

steps apprenticeship commends, I learn instead
to curse the tool, defend the fool who yearned

for shortcuts on a winding road, turning
a hurried seeker into a common toad.

Elementary School

For a week, I've forgotten the box-cutter blades—we need them at work, there's a stack in my attic—today I remember, drop a few in my jacket, 'Safe enough 'til I get to my desk,' I think, with a runs-with-scissors smile, remembering a cautionary tale, fifty years back, a bike, sneakers draped on the handlebars, speeding to mom's chili, just the railroad tracks, a right on Rose and home. I saw what would happen, thought of the chili and 'What are the odds?' the moment shoes hit spokes, sending me flying to the hospital, morphine for pain I didn't feel, first and best of so many highs, stoned and amazed I could see the crash coming, sped ahead anyway. Still smiling, I jump in the car, off to work, feel the buzz of my phone, plunge hand into pocket to answer the call.

Multiplicity

“I don’t look in mirrors much, why ruin a good story?” Iris DeMent

Various faces greet me
in the morning mirror, etched
by different fears, longings.
Each hears its own voice

of reason, harbors an honorable
heart, owns a mouthful
of free-by-god speech
for any occasion, opinion

formed who knows where
with high degree of certainty,
little care for consequence,
no memory, no history, and none

them seems seems willing
to hold my gaze for long.

Security

1.

A blanket we hold
desperately, as if
it were life itself, when
the only thing we have
to fear clutches us
in measure of that
same resolve.

2.

Why fear the thief?
What's yours will not
be lost to force or foolery.
It is safe from scorn,
safe in storm;
secure under sail,
secure after shipwreck.