

easy to love

and this time, firmly knocking, it is Harold the plumber,
call me Hank. I tilt toward and lean over,
he is the galaxy of his tools and skills
and I, alone 3 months, warm to him, my starchy self wilting
he deserves my love because he knows, is true to under-sink challenges

when he stands I see a stubble of gray hair, his chin, "Hank," I want to say,
and do, "would you like a coffee?"
I scan the house for other leaks to hold him. I hold so easily.

we share, now, space, time, a kitchen, the grey morning, the leaking sink
I'm doubly grateful for as it holds Hank, a name lilting as he works

the world feels warmer, and my slim space, a chill
always leaching under the doorways, is now filled, feels good
I stretch my toes with pleasure in my red slippers –
I feel inviting to anyone who might knock today.

Valves

The valves, lady, are not working, so the pump will not work –
valves, vulva, volume: OK – so not coming through,
not voluntarily – nothing is these days –
not a matter of volition, value, nor particular virtue today,
all this I say to self

So what'd you have me do today -- I have a couple of hours?
and watch his quiet face and steady question to me.
surely you have valves enough in your bright blue truck
to mend almost anything before the sun sets on our duet:

Ah, my list is longer than the hose, the pipe,
the pump of my heart, quite rusty now.
it may take you to overtime

to mend almost anything before the sun sets:
another well-sung labor of love.

furniture

slowly carves with her fork
into the skin of the dining-room table,
their bed before she took us and left him

legs, the head and footboards, holding
dark bewilders of mahogany memory
their bed we eat on here translated

carves "Tina," mouth set, calm,
presses and twirls with one tine
deep for the dot of her *i* to conclude

red then white showing clear,
faint smell of sweet wood released,
I don't flinch at my sister's slow work

hide later from mother's anger rising,
slip each night out to its darkness,
the table's size not unfriendly

when I wander toward, hoping to hear
from mahogany's strong underbelly
the deep loving voice of the missing one

foregone

the return of the great blue to my pond,
the silent flight and stilted landing.

where we live wild things come to me
before heron, hawk, woodcock or eagles land.

blood falls on desire's bitten tongue,
and when known, if there is a knowing,

stern joy keeps me still,
breath held, may quicken tears.

it outlines time and somewhere
in the air it holds my death,

obverse and counter to its assault
on my small day, yet, still sudden, startles

possum, partridge, awkward turkey, jay--
I need to hold it brief, close, and true,

pond murmuring its faint, quelling song
before the ancient beaver's dam is done.

Late Afternoon Braiding

his daughter, a complicated challenge,
like him an artist, a shaper, oils, metal, clay,
passionately fierce in all her enterprises

she will leave this September for college

he now braids her hair,
a pause in these times together
it will not be the same again

hair long and dark, her head bent,
dark blue eyes impatiently cast down
on a pencil sketch she toys with

clouds move apart in a slow wind
above them in the summer air
and he with gentlest steady comb
divides her hair in a straight part,

swath over swath carefully
a simple slow weave
hair strong and shining
an elastic waits

to complete and hold enough
together by her tender neck
to keep her eyes clear when she opens
the paint box, licks a favorite brush