

## The Home Depot

1.

Even the inclined plane  
we walk,  
mirrors our journey.  
Together...but worlds apart.

You've found a replacement,  
Iron Man.  
I am isolated,  
Recluse.

You speak of new opportunities,  
options.  
The lump in my throat,  
Nostalgia.

Automatic doors offer  
solutions,  
An immense warehouse of  
answers.

Materials promise repair,  
neglected.  
Tools for the taking,  
untouched.

You say, it's my chance to  
start over.  
I can re-introduce myself,  
sever ties.

(Like some defective product  
made-over...  
manufactured and marketed to a  
top-drawer buyer.)

I am looking back, refusing to  
let go.  
You are looking forward, choosing  
your future.

In a wall of stacked boxes, an empty niche,  
Sylvia's oven.  
I pour myself inside and cover  
my face.

My last visit to this “House of  
Improvement”  
left me on a short  
rope

2.

Tethered to “experts” of  
the mind  
and memories of the child  
within.

With their shelves of  
tools  
and crates of  
drugs,  
what did they really  
fix?

Sobbing in the presence of the  
Hydrangeas,  
I exit through the door we entered  
together.  
You pay for the filter to clear our  
water  
and leave by the alternate route.

## Wreckage

3.

My house survived the storm.  
Damaged, undoubtedly...  
but still upright.

Tearing through our home,  
collecting seemingly random items,  
an escort to oblivion.

Debris left behind... stacks of books  
and their hopeful characters,  
unshelved, displaced.

With force enough to eject furnishings,  
and thorough enough  
to pack your toothbrush,

You've left me  
with the wreckage  
and empty spaces.

## Joint-Custody

4.

Rolling suitcases and repurposed gift bags,  
stuffed with clothes and memories.

How did we get here?

Four kids and two homes and six bruised souls.

The numbers don't make sense to the heart.

Noted mistakes, tally marks in your mind,  
engraved on my conscience  
strike-over the ink of promises.

Years of shared dreams and intimate moments,  
have you fled so discreetly?

I see you bleeding through the parchment  
refusing to give up.

Don't you realize, it's too late?

The suitcases and their innocent handlers  
are gone.

## Definitive Definition

5.

Keen mental suffering or distress over affliction or loss;  
sharp sorrow; painful regret...  
So reads the definition of  
Grief.

Mental suffering.  
Steady weight presses my mind against the confines of my skull from the moment I wake until  
the moment I wake,  
punctuated throughout the day by a hammer that yields ruthless force.

Sharp sorrow.  
It found me below my ribcage today.  
Staring at the lumps of packaged chicken, I inhaled through my teeth  
and knew I could not side-step its arrival.

Painful regret.  
Cooking for one is a parody of normalcy.  
And not bitter, nor sharp, nothing tastes so bland  
As grief.

The pages turned, and I hadn't tended to them...at all... just like the garden in the backyard. Neither of us spent a portion of our time clearing out the dried up messes, or planting new seeds, or even watering the life that existed despite our neglect. Now, the hour is late, the brittle leaves are the foundation of the plot, any recent growth withered beneath the truth of daylight, and neither of us seems able to produce a seed of hope.

Darling, Dearest,  
quite neglectful,  
How does your garden grow?  
It doesn't.  
End of chapter.

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I weeded the “garden” today -If you call a few strawberry plants fighting for space amid a jungle of tree-sized weeds a garden. It was hot. I wore gloves to protect me from the thorns, but some of them pierced deep enough to bring blood. I had to bend and squat and assume a variety of uncomfortable positions. Sweat kept finding its way to sting my eyes, and my hands were dirty, and several times, I wanted to quit. I thought about rushing through it, kind of half-assed... you know?... just focusing on the enormous stalks that even the neighbors recognize. Instead, meticulously, I plucked the tiniest sprouts, one at a time, until their remains formed a sizeable pile. Even as I pulled the last clinging root from the earth, I knew that tomorrow new stems would break through the dirt. The labor was long and detailed, and no one was around to notice what I had done. Standing upright, I admired the boxed plot of overturned soil and the cleared stone pathway. I'd forgotten how lovely it was.