

Unpublished

by Sally Houtman

@God

I pity the God who turns away,
even for an instant, from
his work of crafting bone,
or wing or shell, to relish in
the blush of admiration on
the faces of the masses. For
this, I am sure, will mark
the very moment of his ruin.

.....

At Life's Table

There are crumbs
for those who must,
thick bread
for those who dare.

.....

At This Hour, Nothing More

At this hour, nothing more
than the hum of my computer,
my breathing,
and the music of the wind, saying —
Keep the melody simple,

carve out the sour notes
and start again.

.....

Awe

Is it the coal or diamond
created under pressure
that is deserving of our awe

or rather the earth's
resolute disinterest
in its own result?

.....

Bare Bulbs

Pity those
who only see
the light when
someone turns it out.

.....

Be Still, My Love

What disturbs me most
is not so much the echo of

my lover's cries, but more

the rattling of his chains.

.....

Simply Telling

There was a time we could be pleased
in doing things —

a time will come when we take pleasure
in simply telling what we did.

.....

Inside Out

Not certain
if the cage he'd built
was to protect
or to possess,
the prophet slipped
the lock from its hasp
and set his spirit free.

.....

Lifeline

Our earthly expiration date
written in the skin.

.....

(midnight haiku)

bed springs creak
I close my eyes
and think of rain

.....

Not Narcissus

Before kneeling to admire
your own perfection
in the water's even surface,

be forewarned — in time,
every river carries
its reflections out to sea.

.....

Piano Fingers

With hands
that span an octave,
you play
not one single note.

.....

Purpose

The winter tree,
resigned to the fact
that in its branches
nothing roosts,
takes quiet satisfaction in
simply holding
up the sky.

.....

Regret

a hole
much larger than
the patch that seals it

Star

“Look,” Grown-Up says to Child,
and points. “That star is falling.”
In silence, Grown-Up makes a wish
upon the star, while Child,
in matching silence, reaches out
to catch it in her hand.

.....

this, too...

the tiniest
bird
can block
the sun —
but only
for an instant

.....

Invisible

The line
that separates
prayer
from plea.

rain not rain

Rain
collected
in a bucket
is no longer
rain.

.....

Heroic

Go ahead,
admire the roses

if you like.
I'll save my praise
for the trellis —
that silent, crosshatched hero
of those which, on their own,
would fail to climb.

.....

Separation

Window —
stop this weeping.
It is not you but the curtain
that separates me from the winter light.

The Pebble Dreams

"I would," said the pebble,
"roll down that hill
with great fervor,
if only I were
a little boulder."

Vase

No more shall I wonder
about my distant childhood home —

for the rose I clipped this morning
did not ask where its roots had gone.

.....

Home

A man met a prophet along the road
and, tired and thirsty, stopped to rest
and ask directions.

“Can you tell me, sir,” he said,
“how far I must walk until I reach
a place I might call home?”

“Ah...” the prophet answered, pointing.
“There. You see that spot where the road
becomes horizon? Keep walking.

You will find it there.”

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