

Message

by Elizabeth Hazen

I assembled the crib alone, which was not easy. The pieces were heavy, cumbersome. My body was cumbersome; my arms ached.

When the telephone rang I had been expecting it for some time. Things had been quiet for far too long.

When the telephone rang the fallow fields we lay in years ago became distant countries, filled with falling stars. The distant country into which you had disappeared became a pistol with a single bullet in the chamber.

Back home the winding road had been cause for accidents. Strangers came knocking, begging for the telephone and we learned how not to hear.

Back home the neighbors stared straight through us, so we learned to move slowly; we whispered or did not speak at all.

Even then I loved you. Even then my arms ached with putting things together.

When the telephone rang, I knew what had happened before I knew: the hammer cocked.

Later, I collapsed on the stairs. I woke whole cities with my cries, but could not wake the dead. I ripped my tongue from my throat and the moans that emanated from my gut brought the roof down around me. I spit fire at the crib and watched the whole world burn.

