

# Housewives and Ladders

*by* Ted Laramie

In the upstairs bedroom, the faucet runs wide open, overflowing the garden tub, shoving water to the white tile floor where she lays in a pool of blood. A white package of forty watt bulbs rests beside her sink. A three step ladder lays on its side. The burned out bulb still waits to be changed above.

In their marriage, that was her problem too, waiting on change, for distance to shrink to proximity, for arguments to quiet to lasting apologies, for resentments to cool from the revenge of hot red.

Now, the faucet water dilutes her blood on the floor; just as the vodka mornings diluted her problems, though compromising her balance, unsteady her feet on the stubby ladder which lays on its side one bulb closer to darkness.

Earlier that month, she'd told her friend Valerie that he wanted to kill her and have the children for himself and live in the gifted house with her good memory but not her. If anything happened, especially an accident, they should suspect him. Two months before that, he'd told Valerie that he wanted to marry her and have more children with her and live in his house with her without his wife. Valerie loved him more.

Now it seemed he'd gotten his wish, a terrible accident, which happens every day to women, both desired and despised, while drawing baths, changing light bulbs, and drinking orange flavored vodka. That this happened, a tragic accident, wouldn't change Valerie, not her who wanted to marry him and have his children and live in the house with bloodstained grout between the white tiles.

Emerging from the adjoining closet, his bare feet smack the tile,

sending tiny ripples, pushing her blood in resonating circles, floating  
screams from her lips, still breathing.

