

Classic Poetry Series

Chris Forhan

- poems -

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Gouge, Adze, Rasp, Hammer

So this is what it's like when love
leaves, and one is disappointed
that the body and mind continue to exist,

exacting payment from each other,
engaging in stale rituals of desire,
and it would seem the best use of one's time

is not to stand for hours outside
her darkened house, drenched and chilled,
blinking into the slanting rain.

So this is what it's like to have to
practice amiability and learn
to say the orchard looks grand this evening

as the sun slips behind scumbled clouds
and the pears, mellowed to a golden-green,
glow like flames among the boughs.

It is now one claims there is comfort
in the constancy of nature, in the wind's way
of snatching dogwood blossoms from their branches,

scattering them in the dirt, in the slug's
sure, slow arrival to nowhere.
It is now one makes a show of praise

for the lilac that strains so hard to win
attention to its sweet inscrutability,
when one admires instead the lowly

gouge, adze, rasp, hammer--
fire-forged, blunt-syllabled things,
unthought-of until a need exists:

a groove chiseled to a fixed width,
a roof sloped just so. It is now
one knows what it is to envy

the rivet, wrench, vise -- whatever
works unburdened by memory and sight,
while high above the damp fields

flocks of swallows roil and dip,
and streams churn, thick with leaping salmon,
and the bee advances on the rose.

Chris Forhan