

BACKYARD MECHANICS

Sara Crayne

watching Richard strip this slant-six
engine meant for a Valiant body
he's in love with, a cute baby blue
'vert he traded something in for, with
plus a few bucks extra thrown in.
Smells of dust, grease and pine resin drift
in on the heat, in and between the gaps of
garage siding, under his former shingle,
"Daywalt Garage," its name and number
of the old neighborhood. Today
all is swept clean, clutter displaced
into the yard to make orderly work space.

Still, the decor and architecture speak
of early Our Gang. Old stuff, set
for the odd bud to drift in off
the street up to not much good here
in the middle of a weekday, lounging
in lonely or wanting to joke and smoke.
Red Robert, could be, his viking beard
fading over a Santa belly, otherwise
it's Steve, from Bal'more MD still hustling
his street accents. Later they will call
in Jerry the mechanic, maybe off
the wagon and cynical, for a
six-pack consultation.

Out of the dim beyond a doorframe wide
enough to drive his '51 Chevy flatbed cab
inside, day blares on a *quercus alba*
which is its own gnarled drawing
of elegance: environs, however, strictly
Detroit out of Appalachia for the moment.
Objects linger beneath soaking ambiance
in no sequence, a list of possible
future uses rusting or rotting
through their respective half-lives
in ragged timeline. By the door,
the oil drain pan. A barstool drools
upholstery, still good to perch upon
to contemplate a question. Tile saw.
Disassembled Moto-Guzzi. Oil drum,
Skil-saw, parts full of cardboard boxes
delaminating hollow core door.

Two Peugeot seats are there too, he wants
to put into his customized convertible: ponder
their unmatched hardware fixtures.
Maybe he will find some way to make it
fit together, crafting slowly
wonder from junkyard parts long sought
or guessed at with a spatial
imagination.

He is considering thread dimensions,
grumbling a random anger at the
busted engine mounts he knew all about
before he bought it, showing someone how
none of the valves are burned, how
the pistons fit within their cylinders
tightly justifying him.

Cast metal swings three feet above
concrete where the dog pants. Heavy heavy,
hanging over his head, on its half-ton
hoist from a chain ascending thickly
into rafters. Rooster announcements come
at intervals over the neighbor's pickets.

The block rotates slowly
under his thinking fingers, a big wheel
like the one supposed to move by faith.
A day-light from the circle cut to
hook the chain into, spots down on him
with it, the smaller wheel way up
in the middle of the air, like the song
says turns by faith.
Arno lifts a Dobie/Shepherd eyebrow
at their lingering discussion
of this problem mounting, ear tipped
to the sound "puppy," as in,
"How can we work this puppy?"