

The Gift

When he unlocks the door and pushes it open
and sees Mathilde on the floor and the lamp lit,
he knows he should do something about that waste
in broad daylight, pissing away his money.

But Mathilde lies exactly in his way.
She blinks her eyes, she watches, she
could be anybody's wife, though she is his
forever latched in matrimony, there.

She shoves the heel of her hand into the carpet.
He sees the effort in her elbow, the
exertion in her eyes. She grimaces
and finally fails to move her stubborn body.

He has to reach the lamp, he has to stop
its brightness and the trifling with so much money.
He walks around her, far enough away
so she can't stretch that hand out to his ankle

and stop his fingers from turning off the lamp.
It clicks, the room goes dim. He touches the list
of errands in his shirt pocket. He has so much
to do this afternoon. He should get going.

So, with regret, he walks around Mathilde,
whose body he barely sees, and locks the door
and strolls under the orange and yellow trees
to the lover his wife agreed to let him have

then tried to take away by lying there
with the lamp on. Vaguely, through the day,
when he is standing near his lover's body
and smells the soap on her nape, he remembers this.