

A disturbed student raged in my office
about elk roaming some desert for water.
A swim—I felt my arms harden
and knew I was building more wind.
On the way home, night ignited the town
and I thought of a speech: In conclusion,
let me say Getty let me say—
I remembered his eyes and the sky in them,
his easy prediction coughed out
like we had plenty in common.

Alma / Kathryn Stripling

Two dead leaves
on the table and ice

floats on milk like the ashes
of leaves. Oak
twigs kindle
and fire leaps like a prayer, “Give us

breath.” When I open
the door and breathe deeply
the cold air inflames me.
The fire seizes log after log.

In the garden my husband burns
dead stalks of squash and potatoes.
I sweep my dust into the coals
and our smoke mingles over the orchard.

In winter I sweep the floor gladly.
I gather the crumbs from the cupboard,
and the rinds of the apples.
When the dust bin grows heavy,
I give what it holds to the fire
and the fire sings its song:

raise your dead
from the earth, make a fire
of their bones,
set them free

to be sky
to be nothing at all.

Day of Rest / Jack Myers

When mother lit the candles on a Friday night
the bull plunging through the rooms all week lay down.
Even the gulls settled down like paper on the breakers.
The Sabbath was the torch she swept her house with.

In those days it was simple: a sip of wine rushed us
through ourselves and we were blessed. The stars
came out like little sayings: Be good. Be good.
It was nothing to touch a God.

But it isn't like that now. The afternoons rise up
like the cement sides of an empty sea and filling up
on booze, I become the bull. Knock the daylight down.
The walls redden with laughter and I wake up with them
holding down my fists.

Some Friday night, my last, will find me glazed and stiff.
The light pinched out, last thoughts smoking up
as if I were a wick. Somewhere a woman will be lighting
candles and children drinking wine. God bless.
All night there will be a melting into space,
a long, slow leap toward God.