

1933 · *Joan Swift*

The saw gleams in her hand like a cat's teeth,
dangerous light in the black cellar.
In her other hand, one leg of the oak table.

It is winter again and a cold house . . .
ten days since you came with any kind of kiss
for us or your arms swinging.

Now my mother begins the strange music.
She is holding the table like a cello or a baby.
She leans to the need with her difficult bow.

The legs go in through the furnace door.
The wild grain crackles.
Flames dance on the oval top in orange shoes.

It is not a table anymore, a place for the lamp,
three rings, and a gouge in the finish
where you threw the glass

and she sat crying. Only this heat,
a smell like nutmeg, smoke drawn up the chimney,
you drifting away.