

Dana Roeser

ARS DOMESTICA

The key to this life is
 surprise. Don't say
my whole life is spent
 trying to reunite
socks. Say instead,
 surprise! Here is Jane's
white cotton undershirt.
 Surprise! My husband slept
in the living room; he's in
 a bad mood. Surprise!
Jane spilled lemonade
 over the coffee table
and onto the Persian rug.
 Surprise, it's warm
and looks like rain and
 little red berries are
showing up on the blushing
 dogwood leaves.
There's a bit of
 laundry accumulating in the
laundry room: a light pile!
 a dark pile! and a cold
wash pile! Surprise!
 Jane coughed so
hard this morning she
 gagged and threw up
in the toilet. Not: Every morning
 and evening she does
this. Not: Every time she comes off
 medication, she gets sick
and runs a fever in precisely
 three days. Not: Every time
she gets a full glass
 of lemonade. . . .

Not, I am getting older and
will never look a) young
b) fresh c) thin, again.

No. Surprise! My face
looks rumpled and tired—

I'm sure tomorrow I'll
look young again. No.

Surprise! I seem a little
plump today, can't seem to close
a size 16 around
my waist. See above.

I'm so surprised—my
roots keep growing in dark
with grey streaks!
I'm sure I'll have the pale
yellow hair of my
childhood any minute.

I'm so surprised. Sally wants to
a) nurse again b) eat again c) put
a foreign object
into her mouth again.

Mix up the burners! Put the rice
pilaf on the front burner
to cool, move
the pasta water behind it
to heat—then,
turn on the wrong burner!

Presto! The smoke alarm!
Hand stuck on the horn!

The pilaf soldered
to the pan! What a wonderful
surprise! The whole family
has to run out of the house
into the cloud that has
just landed and is lying
in the yellow grass
of the front yard.