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## Autumnal

Robert Lietz

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# Autumnal

for E.A.M.

November nights, like faces on hollow clocks.  
The first rains cold enough for snow,  
taxi enamoured of young girls with destinations.  
I watch how the runnels from the drainpipes

smack the tar of the drive, rise, fall,  
break into small bulbs of reflected light.

Watermarks lengthen toward the center of our ceiling.  
There is nothing we can do till spring,

the owner has assured us. *You are present  
where land drifts, suggested by dulcimers,  
and I am timid with questions, having entered  
your world brooding, pinned with slow movement.*

This morning, as I follow each step  
heel to toe, my eyes fix on this cup

filled brim-high with coffee, on this milk  
that swirls from the bottom of the cup  
like an image up the spine.

I take responsibility for the painted stones  
and heavy bindings crowding each other.  
The shelves are sanded smooth and lacquered,  
our lungs bleached with a fine dust.

A woman's fingers stretch and roll octaves  
over the white keys, an old song called back  
from somewhere . . .

Circle and square, turning forever one to another,  
the moon cramps, having gone the distance,  
its eyes accustomed to lights out. The stones  
have started their long season of aching.

*The stone is man, a man, become man, becoming stone,  
bristling like fields where wheat  
has been cribbed for weeks.*

So height is forgotten, and blades the constellations  
swing. My pace across the rugs  
and hardwoods focuses dawn on a black spot.  
Small drops of coffee

spill across the brim, soak into the carpet.  
The coffee that stays pales  
as I walk and pause.

—Robert Lietz