

Simon Perchik

Half jack, half when the ace  
finds its way back  
and the vague stomp  
each time you deal a spade

--you teach the kids  
dead ends and random turns  
half cards, half burial grass

--you say take the risk  
bet! and suddenly the black jack  
will fall to your knees  
and dragged out the deck

--you deal with those dead sparks  
from the sun smothered by pennies  
the way each night is born again  
as laughter safe inside this table

hid by a milky thread  
and your eyes not yet ready  
for the light or if the next card  
is the other end you leave behind.

You shave so the rain  
can't stop --twice every day  
as if the sky were twins

half shoreless, half too heavy  
and these rotary blades  
reaching take-off speed

--you climb the way this mirror  
fills with water, becomes some boy  
shaking a tree, expects your hair

will drop safely in the sink  
though Norelco claims the motor  
runs even in a shower

--what does it know about rain  
or accuracy or for hours  
the absent-minded way your face

presses almost too close  
dimmer, dimmer into that turn  
there all the time on your cheeks

kept beardless :a light held back  
at the far end where the runway  
wants one from the few left to it.

It's hopeless! every nail  
exhausted, falls over  
as if the treeline

--there's not enough air  
though the hammer, half  
relentless, half turning back

the way all rescue begins  
just below the horizon  
for leverage --Casey

the nail you lift up  
can be used again  
--a second try to hold together

the same sky, familiar now  
--there's hope --darkness  
is what you're learning

for when a warm breeze  
bends down to cup your hands  
around the evening star

you will soon wait for  
till all that's left to breathe  
is a love song, one after another

--you pull out this nail  
as if it were a flower  
maybe tomorrow, would become

your voice, already scented  
and in your arms  
a beautiful woman is listening.

You limp and her casket  
breaking open, its splinters  
lose hold and this dirt

is water again, each ripple  
wider and wider drags ashore  
though the pebble you tossed

covers the sea with a darkness  
that spends its life drowning  
--a tiny rock broken off

from your step by step holding on  
forever --you walk on water, close  
to the crater's rim half wood

half storm, half where her voice  
could be mistaken for moonlight  
for the one stone more who in the end

is dead and you lift it  
gently, lower it to your lips  
as if it was a whisper, or a mouth.

This envelope never dries, her name  
tightening a faceless turn  
that has the sky to itself

--she is still leaving, rising  
thinning out while your hand  
still damp holds on to a curtain

that is not a dress  
and between your fingers  
wasted words, wasted years

wasted you --what's left  
is a room half walls  
half emptiness, half cold mist

as if there's not enough light  
to sweeten this note kept naked  
covered with rivers and your arms.