

First Marriage

Imagine a man
who stands on a landmine,
having heard the firing pin engage

to activate his fate
as his weight depressed
the buried pressure plate.

Frozen, he knows
how this stalemate goes,
but still he waits, a cautious ghost.

We were the same:
paralyzed, speechless,
with nowhere to go but to pieces.

—First published in *Two Review*, January 2011

A Storm It Is

inclination begins to grin:
slanted forecast

rising— every day
another stair—

unlikely: possibly: maybe
the circle widens

despite disappearing
birds: trees cleared

like dishes: this is
how we know: never

so near as the bottom
branch: there: red apple—

a prize held fast
in imagination:

laughter that outlasts
explanation: because

someone planted
fish in the wheat field

and covered his eyes
till spring: or

we did: rain
like all things

takes patience: prayer
past stillness: footsteps

on cedar chips— even if
no one approaches:

won't there be plenty
of purple blooms

soon: or soon: wait
for the well to fill

Swale

If only sand could swallow morning
the way it does so many things— unnoticed and irretrievably—

like rings or phlegm or reeds,
if my hands could sift through sunken castles

to recover your heart
from where you left it just yesterday, if

nothing yet had been lost,
we could run our toes through shallow troughs,

tickle the wriggling minnows,
then choose: what next, what next to lose.

—First published in *Two Review*, January 2011