

1977

## New House

Diane Ackerman

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when the moon  
sits on top of the Santa Ritas  
then levitates becoming smaller  
and more pale as it goes  
I say I have given you  
nothing it was all I had

but you do not listen you go on  
into your losses without birds  
without mountains or shadows  
or the moon you look into yourself  
and say it is not enough  
it was never enough

## New House / Diane Ackerman

We bought a house hand-me-down  
and complete, packed with all the gear  
family life engenders: cameras,  
clothing, junk and antiques,  
vibrator, bowling ball, pans and glasses.

Every knick-knack knows gossip  
I have no right to, about a Mr. Norton  
who lived, bred, and boozed there.  
I'm told he died of gluttony  
in middle age, towards the end

bloating like a pufferfish.  
Now suddenly I've acquired  
someone's life, as if it were a fondue-pot  
or a hedge-cutter. His initial  
still rules the hall linoleum.

There are mortgages and taxes  
and a pool to skim daily,  
poison-ivy to uproot, grass to mow,  
doors to lock. And me  
with no steady job guaranteed.

Soon I'll leave the little garret  
I've spent five years in, groomed  
and combed and grown used to,  
where I bedded my lover  
and housed my jubilation, relaxed,

fretted, and pined, grew used to.  
A roommate once had an afghan-hound  
with brown eyes like quicksand,  
and such long spindly legs  
it never could lie down right.

I used to watch the poor beautiful creature  
circle, fold and unfold and fold  
its legs again, trying,  
for all the world, just to settle.

## The Song / Denis Johnson

The small, high wailing  
that envelops us here,  
distant, indistinct,

yet, too, immediate,  
we take to be only  
the utterances of loose fan

belts in the refrigerating  
system, or the shocked hum  
that issues from the darkness

of telephone receivers;  
but it speaks to us  
so deeply we think it

may well be the beseeching  
of the stars, the shameless  
weeping of coyotes