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## Sotto Voce

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*Sotto Voce*

Tonight blame Kiri Te Kanawa  
infusing the kitchen with her aria,  
blame the mixed bouquet of basil

and flayed tomatoes and onions  
and one expansive high note blooming  
like a rose in fast-frame.

Here in the audience,  
even in middle age, a little voice sings  
from the back of the auditorium

of my throat. Aren't all of us  
waiting to be discovered?  
Men and women enter the grand halls

of regional sales meetings  
pressing nametags to dresses and ties.  
I have been one of those people

entering hopefully, conducting  
delicate exchanges in hotel rooms.  
I have called those pale disclosures

my life. Blame the cheap seats  
we bought in the balcony.  
We barely hear the little cogs

in our own hearts. Mozart, they say,  
heard entire operas in a moment—  
second violins, a glaze of harp,

heroic voices in the chorus all  
clamoring to be realized  
at once. My genius may be small,

but sometimes truth rolls right at me  
like a hard head of cabbage  
and I see myself that suddenly,

draining the pasta.