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.

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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

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