Ars Domestica

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The key to this life is
surprise. Don’t say
my whole life is spent
trying to reunite
socks. Say instead,
surprise! Here is Jane’s
white cotton undershirt.
  Surprise! My husband slept
in the living room; he’s in
a bad mood. Surprise!
Jane spilled lemonade
over the coffee table
and onto the Persian rug.
  Surprise, it’s warm
and looks like rain and
little red berries are
showing up on the blushing
dogwood leaves.
There’s a bit of
laundry accumulating in the
laundry room: a light pile!
  a dark pile! and a cold
wash pile! Surprise!
  Jane coughed so
hard this morning she
gagged and threw up
in the toilet. Not: Every morning
and evening she does
this. Not: Every time she comes off
medication, she gets sick
and runs a fever in precisely
three days. Not: Every time
she gets a full glass
of lemonade. . . .
Not, I am getting older and will never look a) young b) fresh c) thin, again.

No. Surprise! My face looks rumpled and tired— I’m sure tomorrow I’ll look young again. No.

Surprise! I seem a little plump today, can’t seem to close a size 16 around my waist. See above.

I’m so surprised—my roots keep growing in dark with grey streaks! I’m sure I’ll have the pale yellow hair of my childhood any minute.

I’m so surprised. Sally wants to a) nurse again b) eat again c) put a foreign object into her mouth again.

Mix up the burners! Put the rice pilaf on the front burner to cool, move the pasta water behind it to heat—then, turn on the wrong burner! Presto! The smoke alarm! Hand stuck on the horn!

The pilaf soldered to the pan! What a wonderful surprise! The whole family has to run out of the house into the cloud that has just landed and is lying in the yellow grass of the front yard.