

Renovation

She's packing up his clothes for Community Care
 boxing the photos and mementoes from the dresser.
 Already she is planning to use the insurance
 to reconstruct the space he left in her heart.

She keeps the Day Care going, her life blood;
 She had paid him to come home and work for her,
 build the playground, renovate the basement rooms.
 Now she's running on routines he made possible.

Her son visits her in full flight. To stop,
 even to pause, to let in the vacant cold
 is not her way. She is the maker, formulator,
 the long suffering one you say 'sorry' to
 and never hear her speak it back.

He wanted to see his mother grieving, wanted to be leaned on,
 He remembers her flight from the bedside in those last hours,
 twelve, twenty-four,

 she prayed he would survive,
 squeeze her fingers just once more;
 thirty-six, forty-eight,
 she prayed he would be taken
 and him heading for the break point—
 seventy-two hours he might recover—
 and when on the third day he died
 she was there at his side.

He didn't see his mother lift the shirt
 to her face and fill her nose with his smell,
 didn't see her reach for the pill bottle
 to silence the rage at being left,
 no one to insist upon
 no one to carry forward
 no one to—
 the other word he had never heard her say—
 help.

—Dave Haskins