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Origami Poetry Project

WHAT THEY SAY
 @ KARA PROVOST, 2011

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WHAT THEY SAY



KARA PROVOST

The House Speaks

(Provincetown, MA)

cut from old sheets
 and whispered against the skin
 of sleeping bodies.
 But when my last old fisherwoman died
 no one was left to continue the line.
 The family could no longer pay the price
 of living near the sea.
 Torn down to bones
 and rebuilt, now a parade
 of short-timers moves through my rooms.
 Off-season, the landlord rents cheap
 to an artist who paints all day until
 the snowy light gives way.
 In the breath between spring and summer,
 a family from the city: the little girls marvel
 at doors with keyholes;
 look and look
 out my bright windows:
 Long hot days fill with reviving beachgoers
 seeking a weekend of rented peace
 where the breeze sweeps clean their dreams
 Splintered, splinted, sanded, scrubbed
 my floors buckle like the rolling sea.
 Sheltering your fleeting sleep,
 my bones remember all your stories.

Long ago girls slept
 under my shingles
 in beds shared with sisters, white sheets
 later tented over knees for modesty
 when they gave birth,
 and years later, soft worn,
 shrouded their cooling bodies.
 Five generations of Portuguese fisher families
 dreamed in my rooms. Now you breathe the roses
 blushing in the air, but back then
 there wasn't much time for niceties
 after gutting, scaling, salting
 fish, tending children and nets.
 Grease layered hard-to-reach places;
 my counters turned mahogany
 with blood and wear.
 Bare feet caressed
 my planks, pocked and scarred.
 An outhouse sat
 in the back courtyard—
 no beach roses growing there.
 Still there were late
 summer evenings when the air
 blew soft through curtains

DUO

Dearest Finger:

I don't know if I've told you
 how I love your slim shape,
 your warm cylindricalness
 and the way I rest
 just so: not too tight,
 nor too loose so I slip about—
 just right, so I'm always facing
 the world with my sparkle
 and shine. I remember your joy
 when you received me—
 tiny but brilliant all the same—
 just the right size for your two
 puny paychecks—my gold band,
 my winking blue eye.
 I love you, I do—
 are you, too, still true?

My Dear Ring:

Yes, yes, I love you—
 were we not made
 for each other?
 Do I not wear you
 day and night, wet and dry,
 only remove you when dough
 or dirt threaten your beauty?
 And then how naked
 I feel, and a slim whiteness
 circles where your gold should go—
 I am so marked by you.
 I confess once or twice
 in twenty years I have taken you off
 just to see if the world feels different
 unchartered, unclaimed,
 but I missed you, my dear
 and in truth want no other.
 Rest easy—I'll not put you asunder.

Starry Night

Use the large brush—big bristles—
 lot of paint here, thick
 wet heavy but needs to feel light
 like moonlight, reflections
 on water, light refracting in raindrops,
 falling from stars, flickering and glowing.
 When it's wrong it's awful
 to have your vision pierced with a stake,
 torn to bits, the pieces lost—
 colors vibrate like bees,
 refuse to settle in their pattern.
 Then I want to take the knife
 and slash the canvas, cut
 deep until the paint bleeds
 and the wooden stretcher bar
 gleams through the tear like bone.

How fast can I paint—
 how fast, how fast?
 Some say my flowers are unbeautiful—
 what do they know of beauty?
 I will make a yellow
 no one has seen before—
 shouting, cartwheeling
 noisy as that street outside my window—
 and it will be the stars
 shining in my darkest
 deep blue bruise
 of night.