



PROJECT MUSE®

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## American Husband

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## WORDS FOR THE WALTZ

All night long I've resisted his help.  
What is the opposite of *fast*?

Forcing a kid who's throwing a fit  
—you standing thing you never sit!  
You'll run us all aground!—Help

has water  
just like this: to get us  
turned around.  
But this kid kicks when you pick her up so  
  
there: throw her down.

\* \* \*

—and we have arrived. We have  
arriven. My minions  
push down the plank of my neck  
and back.

We stand on four legs like a makeshift table  
until all hell's dispatched.  
So into the itch! Into the thicket!  
The careful course is cast.

We make emotional revisitings.  
On the hills of impassioned ants.

\* \* \*

*Snail snail glister me forward,*  
bird my back to the wall.  
God begot me from my father  
and delivered the hospital home.

\* \* \*

All day long I've resisted that red  
while I tried to make it match.

I've taken the ax of my effort like a paddle  
and I'm hacking at the shadows  
of my feet.

I've taken the ax of my effort like a paddle  
and I'm dragging this raft  
through a lake

made of concrete.

\* \* \*

Oh hell, oh well. Admit  
you made a mess.  
Now you must tear up the carpet.  
Now you must repaint the walls.  
The color says nothing but there is a judgment:  
everything but the garbage can must go.

\* \* \*

Often stranded in the middle of a feeling the feeling  
of wanting so many is more.  
*Snail snail glister me forward* trail the trailing  
translucent cord.

\* \* \*

Think of it! A sycophant!  
A guttersnipe! A gripe!

Good help has rivers  
filled with fish—*sidelong pickerel*

*smiles. Would with the river and would  
with the fish. His red face*

the same from behind.

\* \* \*

All day long I've insisted on help.  
In the basement  
I'm like a bad cramp.  
*The sun is against me the moon would not have me*  
my tantrum matches the lamp.

\* \* \*

I've taken  
the ax  
of my effort  
like a paddle  
and I'm hacking  
at the shadow  
of my throat.

I have taken the ax  
of my effort  
like a paddle  
and I'm dragging  
this lake

through a hole  
in my boat.

\* \* \*

There's a mirror

next to the window and a window  
on the wall. Smile, he says  
in the middle of the fuss. Eat it.  
Now swallow.

\* \* \*

'Twas a lovely dive, my lively dove  
*What's winter for? To remember love.*

Good help has daughters  
just like this: "My father  
invented water."  
God help us daughters just like this:  
*I with no rights in this matter.*

\* \* \*

The body's a closet  
with cats in the back.  
The sea's grown woolen  
and white. I am  
his consolable widow  
now—one syllable  
bigger than wife.