Necessary Light

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A blue tarp covers the opening the new owner has cut in the roof of the brick house next door. Up there all Saturday, balancing on the incline, his saw affronting the neighborhood. Tonight, the man works beneath it, the tarp a blue glow in his torchlight. From my second story apartment I can see his silhouette, shoulders and head, arm swinging out—a huge fish swimming a tank—that aqua and silent.

Remember last summer—the aquarium? In the darkened room, I pushed your wheelchair close to the viewing glass. We watched hammerheads slide past, circling, circling—their purpose: to swim, swallow, give birth.

Love can be long and difficult: sixteen years, crushed under your tirades, your inescapable pain. Understand, I had to move away.

Next door the man is swimming alone beneath his blue tarp. I hear the bell-bang of his hammer; I hear a drill. When someone moves in, they change a place, bring something from behind, make something new.

I think my neighbor is constructing more room, raising a dormer, but I will miss the old roof line, watching the light bounce off rusted tin, hearing the wind lift torn shingles.