

The Tin House

Some days the mystery is familiar
not sun-wrapped or fire-thrown, that
tin house I walked by, for instance,
running as a kid runs, taking a stick
to its corrugated, sea-sick surface,
the *blip blip blip*, thinking so little
of the old man inside who
peed in a can and threw it out back.
My brother and I, and that bit
of cruelty. It wasn't mystery
but childhood which never blinks
even if the sun's too hot, even now
when I think of him hearing us,
two brats laughing, about to pick up
those ancient weapons, a couple of peeled
maple branches thick enough
to run the length of that house
set straight up from the sidewalk,
his hearing us say *is he in there?*
if we ever thought to say that. He stood
quiet, not moving, a thickened shadow to us,
only a form in the window cut out of tin
or a darkness at the glassed-in door.
He was waiting, I think now, for it
to be over, this small injustice.
Or he was waiting for us
to grow up, for the moment my brother
would turn to me years later — *I feel*
really bad about that — both of us
finally walking there, not a thing
in our hands, nothing to him,
less than nothing.

Sick

1.

Back to one cell.
Amoeba whose heart
can't be broken
since nothing this bad
can be doubled. But divide,
divide, that's sure
and too much enough.

2.

In the bathroom, water,
one slow narrow
flood of it
at the sink, at
the sink, at the
sink.

3.

Cars have their own
business in the street.
And a bigger truck out there,
collecting the glassy rush
to recycle – splintering
stars.

4.

I've lost my sole
occupant. And someone has
left this old luggage
in me, steamer trunks
cracked and torn, stickers

from a country that has changed
its name twice. But nothing
works, not the toilets, not
the trains. I'm going there.
I have this ticket.