Spring 1976

Calling in the Experts

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Recommended Citation
Muratori, Fred (1976) "Calling in the Experts," CutBank: Vol. 1 : Iss. 6 , Article 12.
Available at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss6/12

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CALLING IN THE EXPERTS

Earth tremors dismember the dead
and splinter their skulls.
Molten rock no longer cools
and porpoises conspire against us.

But you know none of this.
You're at home to receive the plumber
who enters through the back door,
not bothering to knock.
He crawls beneath the sink
and for a moment forgets
the purpose of his tools.
The leak appears natural
as it would in a limestone cavern.

As he crouches in thought,
staring at his calloused hands,
there's an awful thud in the apartment
upstairs. You imagine
the ceiling will buckle and collapse.

The plumber tells you his heart is bad
and that he's too old to tamper
with problems like yours.
Maybe you'd better just live with it.
On the way out his trick knee slips
under his weight.
He falls hard on the concrete
but doesn't make a stink
or threaten to sue.
Later in the night you hear
the drip in the kitchen.
Dreams leak slowly from your sleep
and trickle through the floor boards
to the cellar.
Tomorrow the exterminator will come.
You'll know him by the warts on his face
and the smell of his poison.
At this very moment he's awake, planning,
testing his traps on the invisible beasts
that gnaw his nerves.