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Of Two Things at My Door This Morning

Albert Goldbarth

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Of Two Things at My Door this Morning

one is a newspaper
 rolled up to about the fist-thick obduracy
 of the clubs I see they're using, when I unroll the news,
 on a small bent road in another country.
 A woman's been dropped in the road
 like a basket of filthy laundry; a boy I imagine
 is her boy stands a few feet off, with laughter
 on his face—so goofy, so enormously goofy, you see
 his second of understanding has given way to a saving
 incomprehension. That's all: the boy, his mother,
 and the handiwork of five crack guardsmen
 showing up as a dampness crusting between her shoulders.
 Here's what she did: nothing. They needed some
 practice. The clubs just begged to be used. She's lucky
 the boy wasn't butt-raped, left
 beside her to mingle the small leak of his anus-blood
 with her more major pour. Because it happens, you know.
 When God looks away. Or maybe, worse,
 looks hard at it, allows it, enjoys. If God exists
 in a world where this happens. Here, if He does, He's
 somewhere in the dots that mean the sky
 in a newspaper photograph. Or in
 between the dots. The dots are like the atoms of whatever
 substance God lives in, if "lives" is the word,
 if anyone cares after even one morning of headlines.
 The other thing at my door is

this lady, in white so absolute
 she's like a bottle of cream a deliveryman from an earlier time
 might leave. In back, a hummingbird
 bobbins through 8 a.m. light and crepe myrtle.
 The whole day's shaking off sleep, its first words
 not invented yet. She's knocking to ask if the Lord
 has entered my life, and if not will I speak with her
 a moment because the Lord is Eternal Joy.
 She believes this. She doesn't want money.
 She hands me my paper. Her whole planet beams.
 I think of science fiction—somehow
 there's room for her in the universe, too.

Albert Goldbarth