

Alice Friman

The Gift

for Dale

Today's sun
shatters through the fanlight.
An exploded prism. All white light

vanishing into its parts—a fallout
of color, a confetti of shards.

I want to box it up, send it
parcel post, for you—shivering
on your porch in your robe and wielding
the driver's pencil—to sign for,

so I'd know

you held in your hands
the lighter-than-light *makings*

of light.
And how taking the box inside

and setting it down
you'd lift the lid eagerly
as a child a present and know

in the swoosh of dazzle
filling the house, in the brilliance

of bits bumping each recess
with rainbow

that the whole is not
always greater than its parts

and that any concept of us
is no bigger than you by yourself
or me.

Phlox

Through the frame
of the poet's kitchen window,
phlox—spring quiver and gush
freshening the morning, a smart
slap or the bursting open
of a pressurized box of gems.
By rights of witness, hers.

She walked outside.

No xerox of yesterday
or last week, but a *tabula rasa*
laid down like Raleigh's cloak
over the cracked sidewalk
saying *Here is Now, your onus,*
your reward: Opals, a melt
of opals run through a sharpener,
a lexicon of shimmy and glow
to drape over the crumbling,
to honor the shoulders
of the destitute, the blear-eyed,
the knocked down, the tested out,
the anonymous. She had the gift.

How sweet her life that
morning—breakfast bread
and berry, the guiltless
anticipation of desk and pen—
before she saw, spread at her feet,
that dictate of flame.

Tending my own patch,
I think of her often, how the heart
must have stirred in its lockup
knowing *flame* not flower
is what phlox means. And how
before she went inside to pull the shades,
she bit her lip to concentrate on
the little career she hugged to her chest
like a report card, as if there were
no such thing as sight.