

Now's the Time

"I liked the way you took that beating, John. Reckon yourself henceforth a gentleman."

- J. Betjeman, from *Summoned by Bells*

hey, la
you woke up dead
arms gone numb
you thought
"This might not be so bad.
Benta could do the presentation,
cover for me, for a while,
yeah.
I won't go in to work today."

so you settle down
you know
to finally get enough sleep
because since the promotion
even your weekends
get swallowed whole
by reports
dickweeds
and the petty larceny of committee work

so
you lie back
but before you can really
sink
into this suburban *deathening*
your significant other
your---how shall we name them?
your room-mate, mortgage-mate
car-loan, ski-pass, malbec play-mate

your mate
finds you
played *all* out
and after trying in vain
to rouse you
and, a little later
after the weeping's done
you wait
phone calls are made
you're not really asleep
but decidedly not awake

time
it glides

water
in the smaller washroom
runs cold in the sink
a froth in the wash and warpy flow

there's someone there
but, then again,
no.

you're just nodding off
when the ambulance arrives
a tread upon
not rushed but slow
a smell like barbicide
---parched, your throat---
shoes treading the Laura Ashley rug
grim countenances, undertones
the sweat of movers

before you can protest
---they've scraped the wall---
you're inside a wardrobe bag
down the stairs
living
room
past the beautiful things:
the red and blue wing-back Kurismaki
the framed Gang of Four 33
the---
but they're rushing now
someone's injured down the street
"We may have to leave this one,"
you hear the words as though from another room
but they give you hope

you try for one last look
the mercurochrome counter-tops
but you don't see out
and can't seem to move your head

outside the porch
now's the time---it's serious

if you could wake
you swear you'd walk
just get up
but the smells
oh it's autumn
someone's burning leaves
and the scent just