

Linda Black

At the little deal table under the glare of the lamp

(from the diaries of Virginia Woolf)

My feeling is half moonshine. I am trying to tell
whatever self it is cast shade upon me. An odd thing

the human mind, infinitely shying at shadows,
a little strip of pavement over an abyss. Here I sit.

Like a lantern in the middle of a field
my light goes up in darkness. I think too much

of whys and wherefores, can't settle
as I should. I am twenty people! I thought

I was becoming more myself. Here I am
chained to my rock, one touch of red

in the cheek, the machinery
a little cumbrous, a cloud in my head. I should

notice everything, the phrase for it coming
the moment after. These mists of spirit

have other causes; the shut up house;
dust sheets on the chairs, the least interesting of rooms

the compromise, like little sips,
thin as a March glaze on a pool. I took a vow

I'd say what I thought, think myself
infallible, and so I write nonsense

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that life mayn't be wasted. The windows
fidget at their fastenings. I feel now and then

a tug to vision, the little owl calling.
Yesterday the river burst its banks. My mind

works in idleness – I am stuffed with ideas!
– feel I can use up everything

I have ever thought. The soul swims
from one lighted room to another.

Last night I looked at the meadow – trees
flinging about, such a weight of leaves

every brandish seemed the end. I do not
love my kind – I let them break on me

like dirty raindrops, dry little shapes
floating past, second selves, obscure and odd.

Never mind. Arrange what pieces come your way, live
entirely in it and come to the surface

obscurely. I can float everything off now,
a crowd, a weight, a confusion in the mind, a sense

of my own strangeness; those mountain clouds,
a small stone, the fall of a flower. (She too feels wonder.)

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Here's my interesting thing, and no quiet
solid table on which to put it.