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What We Don't Tell Our Neighbors

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What We Don't Tell Our Neighbors

I tell myself the new blinds are to filter the light.
We've decided that six months to unpack
isn't unreasonable. Cans of paint wait in the hollow
rooms, my lover's footsteps echo through vents,

the attic door yawns and murmurs in splinters.
Ellen's grown tired of thinking up excuses
to give our neighbor with the hot tub.
The loose window frames sound a choir of whistlers.

The topic of caulk comes up again.
Three pans and a rose vase catch the rain.
Flashing, soffits, shingles, mortar: we see daylight
slipping behind the beams in long, loose rays.

Widow Kelly tells me I must dress pretty
to catch the boys. Twice she's offered her Mary Kay
book of beauty tips, the 70s hair flips framing
a glitter of blue and pink eyeshadows that stretch

from ear to ear. We shovel dirt against
the foundation to keep the basement dry.
Termites enter through any rotted wood.
Windowsills, siding, doorjambs, woodpiles.

Mike the Mailman asks if I am the daughter.
Before we moved in there were no locks on the doors.
The couple across the street kindly tell me
they keep an eye on everything. As she trims

our shared bushes, Katherine Callahan
asks what would happen to the house
if one of us married. A little confused,
the irises sprout in December, green and ridiculous.

—Karen Skolfield