

2011

Detour

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Recommended Citation

Guignard, Lilace Mellin (2011) "Detour," *PoemMemoirStory*: Vol. 11, Article 15.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/pms/vol11/iss2011/15>

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DETOUR

On the phone with Dad, I explain
how I tore out the toilet
and ripped up the bathroom floor,
borrowing a pipe wrench
to twist loose hot and cold.
Good for you, he says.
I tell him the last guy
glued the flange to the sewage pipe.
I used a hack saw!
Whatever it takes, he says.
I like to talk with him
about repairs, show I'm not
hiring out. Trouble-shooting
is important; he's taught me this.
Then, if you need help,
ask—but be careful. Some professionals
try and tell you what's necessary.
You must know yourself
or you'll likely get taken.
It had rotted below, I continue,
wood soaked through.
That was the smell. That's why
I felt into crevasses,
cracks turned to soggy canals.

Now it's his turn,
but he doesn't mention
the house or river ducks.
He took a stress test—
just for kicks—he says.
How could he flunk?
The doctors made him come back,

shot dye into his groin and mapped
its travel like the Liquid-Plumr ads
in which a see-through elbow pipe
reveals the clog. At the word “by-pass”
my mind snaps up a scene
of highway construction:

Detour 2

This Ramp Closed signs, *Take Next Exit*.

There are no symptoms, he says,
why should I have the surgery?
Still, a faulty warning system
scares us more—like sensing your floor
give way as you stand at the sink
facing the mirror, like finding your hometown
removed from the freeway signs
and there's no one to tell you
how it just disappeared.