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to nobody, too

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to nobody, too

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winner of the best creative writing

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i am reading poetry in the bathtub
 again,
 as if those cold sweet plums
 or that red wheelbarrow
 could take away the sharpness
 of your absence
 running through me
 like thread through a needle
 or a needle through my skin
 —which is it?

i sense the element of blank
 after loving you,
 from what i've tasted of desire
 she walks in beauty, like the night
 and wakes to new periods
 of pain—

then a formal feeling comes
 and along with it age,
 i have not been as others were
 as the water adds time
 to my hands
 and softens the words i'm holding
 i put my pretense away, but
 the words remain,
 walking a little behind me:

these come to me days and nights
 and go from me again
 the water grows cold
 like the plums,

as i pretend to forget and smile
 as i remember and am sad
 and so i read poetry
 in the bathtub
 a coping mechanism,
 a defense—
 like an arched cat, threatened
 with hairs on end.