

Basement Telephone

There's a man in the basement and a woman on the phone.

My house is bleeding.

Hot water leaks up from beneath the stone floor.

Every 2 hours I return to the basement to remove a towel and lay down a new one.

I wring the towels out in the shower.

I pile them up.

I wash them.

I dry them.

I lay them down again.

My hands are dry and chaffed.

The rust itches.

I add bleach to the wash.

Yesterday I bought a housewife mop.

I already own a bucket.

I can now clean and put pressure on the wound before dressing it with a fresh towel.

Egyptian cotton is very absorbent.

It's almost impossible to find a plumber that will actually call you back, assuming their number is still in service.

The plumber says the steam return pipe is leaking.

Pressure is building, rising up into the radiators, but when it falls back down it leaks.

He organizes leftover boxes in the basement.

He assembles banker's boxes upstairs.

As he leans over, blood rushing to his head: I feel the surge of frustration, the anger, the pressure building, ready to break, the desire to tear the box in half just for the fuck of it, because he's upset, and that would help.

Placing the lids on the bottom.

Leaving them out, empty, ready to be filled.

I hear the dogs upstairs.

Now there's one next door too. Barking. Barking. Barking.

I want to scream.

I walk by the window naked.

I stack. I organize. I stack.

I move things downstairs. Then upstairs.

Back to where they were.

It's like nothing changes.

I see the difference.

I feel the difference.

I know the difference.

The phone rings.

He goes to answer it.

He lifts the receiver.

She's on the other end, she says "hi."

I can hear her smile.

I smile.