

Waiting for the Plumber

It begins with a sigh,
inevitably, though this is pure
conjecture, and only because by the time
I notice, the sound's like breathing
or the blood in my veins or
ghostly thrum of maybe synapses firing;
I mean to say, it is and it isn't.
I turn off the fluorescent light: no.
Could it be the computer?
Am I mad? Is it tinnitus?
Or the box fan down the hall?
In the middle of the day it whispers;
the radio, or by now, heater,
drowns it completely. But this is not
true, either: the relentless hum holds a high note
vibrating to a heart's beat,
burrowing under skin, up arms
to the back of my neck. And it's growing,
I know it is, no longer beneath
the bathroom alone: from my bed now
through a swelling count of black hours
I listen, laid bare,
to the thin constant flow, the wispy drone
just below. They'd warned me
this could happen soon—old pipes,
you know, corroded and worn;
galvanized! Still, up to one last task:
ignoring valves, doing no one's bidding,
running and running and running.