

Judith Barrington

The Last of the Blackberries

Marie Selland Taylor 1927–2006

for Tom

The last of the blackberries clung to brambles along
the drive as one season moved aside for the next:

It happened right there while we sat at the round table,
poems hovering in the warm air between us,

vine maple coming out like the sun. Great clumps
of yellow blazed against dark pines as our words

settled on notebook pages, our voices sang language
aloft to merge with those last breaths of summer

blowing in from the sea—the sea which each morning
burst out from behind its wall of fog.

Somewhere out of sight, perhaps in the shadows
of the forest on the hill above, or maybe

in the shed with its door hanging from a rusty hinge,
the future lurked: hospital, surgery, your heart

so full of poems and life that it seemed to embrace
us all—that heart which so soon needed to be fixed.

We knew the future waited there, but we spoke
of your cat, the garden you loved, memorable meals,

and the cadence of words that hummed around our circle—
cadences that sometimes needed to be fixed.

It was easy then to believe we could fix anything,
that one thing would always lead easily to the next

and that the next thing would be just what we expected—
the fog bank growing wintry, a touch of frost

before the red leaves scattered, your generous heart
moving into a mild, kindly winter.

The seasons hung in perfect balance before
everything tipped and summer slipped away.

