

TAKING THE MASTER'S HAND

Some days, I can't do it.
I don't know how I ever did it.
I am sure I will never do it again—
write even one line of poetry.
If words were beads to be strung into necklaces,
my hands would be two stumps of ginger.
I sit on the bedroom floor and stare at sky,
then go for a walk around Lake Cedar,
reliving past mistakes.

After a rope-length of such days,
my future is a flat gray pond.
I leaf through an anthology of poems one morning
and read one by Tu Fu, a poet of the T'ung Dynasty.
His eight lines are not grand or difficult,
yet take me without effort to an old hermit's cottage
with words I know intimately: *sparrows, crickets, wine*.
I, too, have selected these words,
rolled them in my palms.
It was not impossible ...

I re-read Tu Fu's poem, marveling
how this modest rectangle of text
is a window leading me towards
ah, solid ground again—
sudden fragrance of pine—