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Llyn Clague **Sharing the Soap**

"I feel I'm living in a *bubble*,"
grumbled my wife as we showered on the morning
she goes, as a volunteer,
to teach young mothers in prison
quilting.

Sharing the soap, discussing the troubles
of grandmothers with loans from their care providers
at 20-30% interest, plus fees, costs
no caring person would consider
fitting –

"We," with both pension and double
health coverage – Medicare and supplemental –
"are," I said, soaping her back. "A bubble
in any other developed country considered
normal."

Scraping away at my daily stubble
as she insisted on soaping her front
herself, I added, "Half-a-mil rock docs
want bucks *now*. Hospitals' over-heads be
swollen."

"But usury? Abominable! Unconscionable!"
barked my generally mild spouse.
"Banks, credit cards, finance loan sharks –
it's wildass free-enterprise finance that's all but
criminal!"

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Upending, uncapping, choking the bottle of shampoo,
she crooned, with a gruff, off-kilter glottal
stop, "Skip, skip to, my darlin', my Lou, my little
ink-dink, parlez-you, voo-who, doo-wop
pop."

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Suddenly Awake

Suddenly awake
like a bubble popping.
Five a.m. dark,
the world sleeping.

Like a match scratched,
the flame flaring.
The dark breached,
a widening clearing.

The mystery of,
in the pinpoint balance
of this silence,
being here, alive.

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Facing West

Where our summer house stands on a western hillside
like America on the vista slope of empire,
the first rays of morning shoot high over our heads
onto the dark green mountain across the water.

As the earth falls backward into the sun,
the crown of the near woods, at the edge of our clearing,
gleams a paler green; then, in slow motion,
the light drops the length of the birch trunks,
slim and white as streaks of lightning,
to strike gray boulders, grass white with dew.

We see nothing of dawn's brilliance at our backs,
but at the end of the day the sky burns above us,
orange, purple, deep reds, while down at the true horizon,
behind the near trees, the heart of the fire is hidden.