

/ Brenda Hillman

The Made Thing Thinks of You

Electrons don't think
you need to work
without them.
In the kitchen, they are let loose.
The pudding, the creamy
dreamy cake. Jam jars
put on their dwelling
hats: saved with
screwtops, Mason jars
mailed from the south with figs
as gifts in boxes with straw, their metal
threads now stripped,
rusted, trusted in energy, cleaned,
sealed, sized up or down
by your mother's eyes that watered
a little in springtime. In
her prime mid-century kitchen. In
grocery sack-lined
cabinets of
golden ash with turned-up handles
for hollows of jars, hollows of
women's work in the century.
Electrons predicted to be there
may not be. The teapot
wearing its glass lid when
you leave may not have

a lid when you come back. Smallages
duck their heads
 in the farthest regions
 with the biscuit basket &
the mother saw that it was good.
 You are her helper. The century
 is in shambles.
(What are shambles?) Children aren't lonely
if not
being watched. The radio
set to the classics channel:
smooth & rousing waltz music. Strauss she

said. A little film of
butter on chrome knobs. It's up
to you to help her stir. Electrons
 know when to leap. The countertops
 have the leaping Fifties boomerang pattern.
She cleans

cleans cleans
she cleans cleans cleans cleans the boomerang
countertop. Heaven will be clean when she
gets there. Dogs yipping outside.
Hanging pots from copper mined nearby.

The two of you make dreamy creamy
pound cake from the recipe in her head.
In the freezer, ice talks
 to cracking water. With metal
ice trays, you have to lift the handles. It's only
probable electrons leap over shapes
 in the heart
of matter. The mixer with
 the pink-rimmed quilted cover
 has three speeds: one slow & two

slowers. Cream butter thus for
dreamy pound cake & the Lord said,
it's better with butter.
(No, the Lord did not say that.) Electrons
work hard
in the 20th century, you learn someday. Poppies
thought to be dead are pressed under glass &
hung on the wall. Friendly
olive oil, carafe on a trivet with one
foot missing. *Could you bring
the trivet, honey?* Matter strives
to get past the fifties
cheerful as Doris Day. The freezer sighs
when you open it, same burnt smell
as the breeze when stars
were made. A leap
when the cake is ready.
Someone comes in
looking for his lost temper
& retreats. You have to keep
your temper. Keep one of everything.
In the drawer of summer items, striped
“terry cloth” covers for ice tea
on the patio. Frosty tumblers

for adults to be happy with
(Around. To be happy around. But not
too happy.) Corn-shaped prongs to
stick in summer corn, rarely used.
Light laughter on the patio. Her
guests are mostly happy. The slalom-
handled casserole dish
has yielded its place to the finer dish

from Sears. The cookie jar
stands guard, the favorite. Thou shalt not
lose thy memory in the west.

Glum pots, polished silver in
z2blue felt bags with yellow ribbons
like Bible bookmarks to tie them,
electrons from the start of time
nest in nesting bowls. You can't
say where parts of
childhood went. Missing stem of
the pestle bowl. Your mother had
a dainty dread,
weeping with onions over

the best paring knife. Only one good

carrot peeler. Stacking
cups a wedding gift under
cone-shaped lights. She loved her wedding.

Electrons from the start of time never
stopped their love. Spoons after the war years.

Weren't they

all war years? Spoons for display from
Brazil. Socialized measuring
cups, tops that never planned
for plastic. Dents in the flowers of juice glasses,
knitted pot-holders with

pigtails. Niels Bohr

hadn't met this kitchen or

he would have known some
matter stops. If
the butter is hard, you thaw it, when it
refuses, put frozen bits in the mixer. Bump.

Guests will eat with praise. Years
in the half-
enchanted place:
shredder dreaming of shredding,
pastry brush with curled hopeful
bristles nothing can clean, placemats
with stuck crumbs she couldn't
push out even with
the old toothbrush. Recipes
in turquoise ink.

You'll think of them
among dimensions
when she's dead. Electrons
think of you. You think of them.
Even her
ashes entering the ground looked
organized, saved & sized,
a glint at the heart of matter.
There may come a time,
she said. Save one
of everything. She said love
lights the world.