

Nancy Willard

The Patience of Bathtubs

I admire the patience of bathtubs,
their humility, their grace under pressure.
I have seen bathtubs like melancholy tureens
into which the moon ladles her light broth.
The saint who sailed from Ireland in a bathtub
found the Blessed Isles, and no wonder.

A strange tub once adopted me, carried me
for hours in its magnificent belly,
gurgled for joy when I pulled the plug,
and filled it—oh, Zen disciple—with emptiness.
How it crouched on four creamy legs,
a snowshoe hare in hiding from hunters

or a white cat willing the wren's breath
to make a small stir in the hedge,
like that Roman fountain in the Hyde,
marble-mouthed, leaf-lipped, muttering water,
filling the chaste basin with off-color stories
leaving their rusty breath on the streaked stone.

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