

MARILYN BOWERING  
**MYSTERIES**

1.

In the house where they sit, hands on their knees—  
the aunts and uncles, the old poets—  
the young pace and test the walls for windows.  
Rain falls on the roof and into the open throats  
of lakes and rivers. In the firelight, a tree bends near and listens.  
How can that be? It is that kind of house.  
Trees listening to fire, and a conversation between them.  
And then the sky lifts and the doors and windows disclose.  
I don't have to explain. I am a bride on the threshold  
of Spring, the women sewing and singing,  
loosening their aprons, dressed in a flurry  
of bees' wings.

2.

My aunt takes out the scissors, rustles through the rag bag,  
brings out the tracing wheel and the chalk,  
and then she fills  
her mouth with pins.

I am a stork. I stand on one leg,  
my feathers are the iridescence of taffeta: blue shimmers  
on her shears from the lingering moonset.  
She measures and re-measures while I change,  
and my aunt says, as she cuts the threads,  
that I am the one  
who understands her.

3.

You hold my hand in these woods we enter together,  
and at last, before we have gone far this time,  
where the moon sits neatly in the fork of an alder,  
as if its golden ball has been caught there all night,  
I ask who you are. Are you a mother, a father  
who unlatched the bedroom door for one last story?  
Or did you want to show me the future?  
I am interested: time will not wait like this moon  
in the tree: a real moon must make its way around the world,  
recalling the eyes of its people.  
You are a friend, I think: one I knew as a child,  
but you are also the death I unearth each day.  
One of these must fail to thrive. Only one  
can reach the wet marsh and the willows  
with their troves of bird song.  
You are my friend and have been near to me.  
I will be cold without you  
when I have to let you go.