

The First Chance Was The Last Chance

Robert Adamson

for Sasha Grishin and Garry Shead

Down sandstone steps to the jetty; always
the same water, lights scattered across the tide.
Remember we say, the first time.
Our eyes locked into endless permission;

this dark gift; why can't I let go
and be the man in your life, not the one who writes
your name down for the dedication page;
whatever the name, you know who I write for;

you know how private, how utterly selfish
the muses are — This is your image,
crafted in the long hours away from you.
The house rocks, money comes and goes, fish

jump against the tide, the children grow
and go out into the world. The bleak eye turns,
my tongue speaks with ease; it's the rudder
that steers the stream of words into their daily meanings —

not the meaning beyond words. I cried out
when you were not here, I smashed my fist against a stone.
My art was stone. The red glow cracked the kitchen window,
I carved the roast and served it to the cats.

Sign posts point the way, bitter laughter
stings the wounds, my black heart beats. This way
to the shop and gallery in the ordinary day. Clap
your hands against my ears, turn off the light —

you stay. It is always you, shapes change,
the music becomes a pool of melancholy sea water
distilled in sun, slapping rocks. This love
makes the art that walks in a son and moves a daughter;

they cannot always see. You can't see what makes
a spark in me — The seagull's eye, reflects a shoal
of whitebait, alive with death. We move through time —
I sing in the light: the first chance was the last chance.