

A Cup of Tea

Allison Joseph

Wherever words will take me —
past the divining rod of sight,
the locked and cluttered room
called memory — I will go there,
a little diffident, but learning,
discerning salt, sweet,
this hot tea's bitter edge,
camomile, laced with honey.
I drink it to quiet
those rare moments something
must be said, when that magisterial

inner voice decrees: *This is your life,*
pay attention, a demand that sounds
in the brain's vital crux
of reverb and vision, until
there is nothing but its admonition,
its high-pitched traffic. This morning,
I'm learning the secret is play,
shuffling these words so you
may believe them, so I may offer
something of this world — this

small kitchen I write from,
its stacked, unwashed dishes,
white rind of egg shell
on my plate. All I can tell you
is what I know: the compromises
each day allows, the joys
the body knows — tense, stretch,
fingers that grasp, release.
The clamor of these words
will help me find a home
for this body, learn to sing

its hymn — a music so slight,
so seldom listened to,
I've got to try here
in this kitchen's dim light,
my feet on cold tile, hands
wrapped around this earthenware
mug's rocky contours, to capture
that sound before I move on,
into this day, before speaking
any further.