A Locked House

By W. D. Snodgrass

As we drove back, crossing the hill,
    The house still
    Hidden in the trees, I always thought—
A fool’s fear—that it might have caught
    Fire, someone could have broken in.
    As if things must have been
    Too good here. Still, we always found
    It locked tight, safe and sound.

I mentioned that, once, as a joke;
    No doubt we spoke
    Of the absurdity
    To fear some dour god’s jealousy
    Of our good fortune. From the farm
    Next door, our neighbors saw no harm
    Came to the things we cared for here.
    What did we have to fear?

Maybe I should have thought: all
    Such things rot, fall—
    Barns, houses, furniture.
    We two are stronger than we were
    Apart; we’ve grown
    Together. Everything we own
    Can burn; we know what counts—some such
    Idea. We said as much.

We’d watched friends driven to betray;
    Felt that love drained away
    Some self they need.
    We’d said love, like a growth, can feed
    On hate we turn in and disguise;
    We warned ourselves. That you might despise
    Me—hate all we both loved best—
    None of us ever guessed.

The house still stands, locked, as it stood
    Untouched a good
    Two years after you went.
    Some things passed in the settlement;
    Some things slipped away. Enough’s left
    That I come back sometimes. The theft
    And vandalism were our own.
    Maybe we should have known.

