Those Winter Sundays

By Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early
    and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
    then with cracked hands that ached
    from labor in the weekday weather made
    banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I’d wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
    When the rooms were warm, he’d call,
    and slowly I would rise and dress,
    fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
    who had driven out the cold
    and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
    of love’s austere and lonely offices?


Source: Collected Poems of Robert Hayden (Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1985)