Poem to a New Wife

David Passey
Poem to a New Wife

Maybe you don't know
but a man has more than blood
 ticking in his machine;
he has fear. With women

it is not the same. The thickness
of his wrists, the dumb strength
of his hands and heavy shoulders,
he wonders what next
will crumble beneath the pressure
of his fingers.

The sandstone of his jaw—
this is not the oval face,
the quick wren of a boy who spoke
your name from the lilacs
of your seventeenth birthday.

The stuck lid of the pickle jar
stayed stuck in his fists,
but the jar, the very jar itself,
shattered. Just yesterday

he bent his back and heaved
your car from the hissing ditch,
and the strength of him—
that back, the thick legs.
It is this he fears.

And so, when he circles you in love
and your ribs strain like timbers,
do not cry out.
Instead, pull his face

to your neck, feel the wool

of his breath on your throat

and speak to him in murmurs

of the highways you see rising

from his palms, the cities from his bones.