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A Breakable Spell

Jane Hirshfield

I don't know
with what tongue
to answer
this world's constant question—

whether the tongue
of red enamel, or blue,
whether the tongue
of flowing water, or ice,

or the tongue of the mountain,
or the split-songed
tongue that embraces first light

But it keeps asking
and so I continue,
trying *cucumber*, trying *window*,
trying *egret*—

For a moment
she stands with her
elegant legs
black in the water.
Below her, another looks up.

My love,
there is no sound between them.

Then,
inside apples and subways,
in smokestacks,
in blossoming roses,
the heart's machinery starts up again,
hammering and sawing.

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