

MARTHA COLLINS

SWITCH

little switch cut
from backyard tree
passed to me:
picked it up made
it whip couldn't leave
it there on the table
made it chain turned
the key on myself
turned myself in
turned me over
my own knee

WHILE TRYING TO DECIDE WHETHER

... *a handle on my issues*, I heard in the gym
the green trowel with the wood
made to be grasped or held, I read
stammered a story that should have *No* for an ending
hand on the gate, hand on my hand
a friend said: *it will be right*
and it will be wrong if
but what is the word ...
what if we put a fence around
wrote *we*, crossed out *we*, wrote ...
to go out to go in
the poem handled the problem of
but no it did not could not

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did not intend foresee should not
chitter of sparrow-filled boxwood
walking the cold-loving dog, dog walking me
your friend, will she tell you to run? and I thought
hum him home
making a dog-line, right-left-right, down the sidewalk
the sparrow hieroglyph, unpronounced, meant *small, narrow or bad*
bird I read heard *bed*
bathing each other in dust and water
Aphrodite's bird cannot must not
hum again, keep humming
but those sparrows!
neighbor's dog: I am my own animal, maybe with wings

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line of flight, *as the crow . . .* but toward or away?

yes yes but no's back a

hand for no from yes

but do not know how not to I wrote

then *red sky at night* slipped into *morning*:

cardinal pair on a branch, mated for life

or pairs skaters on ice, in the air, defying?

cardinal from *door hinge* that

on which something turns this

the word for door open

here's the main thing: o

lives in no in its thin hands

no holds yes it will be (all) right