

# THE PLUMBER DIAGNOSES A LEAK

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The plumber diagnoses a leak as human error,  
but there the humans weren't there to err.  
Invisible puzzles can do that on the second floor,  
especially when they drip into the kitchen ceiling.  
The pipes form a stack of crossroads and elbows.  
Space is pressurized, time is compressed.  
Even years of sedimentary layers can create  
unexpected eruptions around fossilized flotsam.

Plumbing, the profession, is an archaeology  
of the opposite of knowledge: studies the unshared,  
the occulted remains that were not meant to remain.  
Sometimes privacy is meant for what we discard,  
and plumbers intuit the designs of those hidden pathways.

"Tampons and condoms are the most likely..."  
the plumber explains, and I desperately think, "Don't I wish!"  
but how are we supposed to evaluate stained drywall,  
human behaviour, chthonic hard water minerals?  
I disagree, try to rule out the diagnosis, ask for differentials.  
I try not to make this house into an episode of *House*.  
I try not to argue, but the plumber wants to speculate  
and I can't tell how important that is.

"I could tear out drywall all day, for days, chasing the leak,"  
(there are so many *House* puns, e.g. Chase),  
"but your goal is to sell this place," the plumber reminds me.  
We return to problem-based diagnostics. What is the problem:  
in or out, up or down, stop or flow, sink or sell? I suppose  
I am stuck on the problem of the maze, and  
while the plumber analyzes the mind of the previous owner.  
Both of us make inferences, and leaking takes time.

