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Basement Suite

By Karen Solie

From the [August 2020 issue](#) [Download PDF](#)

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Left to our use are the fixtures and appliances
Repented of by the homeowners
Who don't realize this is a way to know them.

In the basement one is closer to God
Because closer to consequence
To the creatures no one loves but the specialists.

Rice weevil, bean weevil, rose weevil, pea weevil,
Flour, black vine, and strawberry weevils,
A weevil to every purpose under heaven.

The basement is a tree house in the roots
Think of it that way
And cold on five sides, like childhood

When water in the pipes was a talking animal
And it was advertised that soil neutralized
The toxins applied to it, that

Our bodies did, and that the sea
Carried poison on its back into the hills.
Our faces to the wall, to radial domestic passages

Beyond it, heartbeats and adjustments
Attenuated through the half-space, lo-fi
The light is radio light.

The house tries to forget we are here
Yet there are bars on the windows
In some places, like childhood.

A slight clinging smell is associated.
Every living situation has one.
It's not the Underworld, for Christ's sake

Which is everywhere, without depth
But the gaze does learn to creep along the baseboards
And sharpen its knives on them.

Walking on the surface again
If we can bear it
After so long sheltering in place, we may appreciate

More than anyone a bit of natural warmth
Though money flows no more freely up here
Look around you.

Karen Solie

lives in Toronto. Her most recent collection, *The Caiplie Caves*, was published last month by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

More from Karen Solie

The North

By Karen Solie, from a manuscript in progress. Solie is the author of several collections of poetry, including, most recently, *The Road In Is Not the Same Road Out* (2015)....