Men Who Fix Things

Grant Berry

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I admire men who fix things,
build things, or make things better.
Men with flannel shirts,
leather tool belts, and tape
measures clipped to their hips.
Men who own power saws,
air compressors, and drills
with all the bits.
Men with complete ratchet sets
and wrenches, even
the metric ones.
Men with nails and screws,
bolts and nuts and washers,
separated in small plastic drawers.
Men whose fathers taught them
to measure, cut, sand, caulk,
and with patience,
to try, try again.

I have two hammers. One
has a cracked handle,
the other, a loose head. I have
a dull, rusty saw, pliers
that don't clamp all the way,
and three screwdrivers — all phillips.
I have an odd assortment of nails
and screws and bolts and nuts
all tossed together in a coffee can.
I have a father
who thinks it's funny
that I am nearly forty
and I can’t cut a straight board
or an even piece of trim,
fasten a light fixture,
or secure a shelf.
He snickers when he sees
I’ve hung picture frames
with roofing nails.
He thinks I should have paid
more attention
when I was younger,
back when he was yanking tools
from my hand, shouting,
“Get back! I’ll do it!”