

Mrs Ellen Allen

She learnt, slowly, to ignore the bulbs
which rolled, unannounced, out of newspaper
the bare pots leaving watermarks
specks of dirt on sills
compost gnats jostling at the larder window
and instead, to accommodate
his voice in sleep murmuring Latin
straight from Rennie's *Botany*
-radix, axil, caudex-
rare words for plants' secret places
while his hands traced her veins
soil under his nails
the gentle query of his touch, then
a bloom brightening in the weak light.
She thrilled to the secret joy of it-
his smell, always, of pencil sharpenings, moss,
his kind face in concentration like a boy's.
He knew when to wait, to hold or to halt-
when dormancy could, again, be quickened into life.

Rosemary Appleton, Bury St Edmunds