

JOHN MOORE

Saturday Evening in Summer, 2015
Oil on canvas, 70 x 68 in



COURTESY HIRSCHL & ADLER GALLERY

ELLEN BASS

Prophecy

It will get worse before it gets better.
Or it will get better and then get worse.

There has never been a prayer that could keep night
from scratching out the eye of the sun.

Gravity will hold the mountain close
and the sea ferry its burden of water.

A speckled chicken will outrun a dog. Iron will rust.
There will be no mercy for the floreana coral.

Everything you've ever said you'd never do, you'll do.
Your failures will clog the streets of your heart like taxis at rush hour.

Your sorrows will drift like cherry blossoms the May
your mother was dying. All that beauty heaped in the gutters.

Your head will be the moon. Right iris,
the Sea of Serenity. Left, the Sea of Rains.

You will be more kind.

The male newt will offer the female a sperm-filled cushion,
which she will suck into her cloaca.

You will know hunger again.

The fish monger will display his fish on a bed of lilacs.
The smell of cut wood will bring you a simple gladness.

While the earth keeps chewing, its massive jaws
grinding down orange rinds and children's bones,

a prisoner will mop a linoleum floor, counting his breaths,
each exhale feeding the unseen grass.

In one night, the world will dream thirty billion dreams.
Fear will sleep, purring at your feet.

Ellen Bass's collections of poetry include *Mules of Love* (2002), which won the Lambda Literary Award; *The Human Line* (2007), named a Notable Book by the *San Francisco Chronicle*; and *Like a Beggar* (2014). Bass's honors and awards include two Pushcart Prizes, a Pablo Neruda Prize, a Larry Levis Reading Prize, and a *New Letters* Literary Prize. She teaches in the MFA program at Pacific University and lives in Santa Cruz, California.