

Elena!

We are building the ruins.  
It is taking a long time.  
There will be almost nothing

but what has not been plundered:  
shattered shoulders of concrete,  
glass, tiles, the deepest foundations.

What was here will have to be imagined—  
Skies will be so empty whole cities  
will stand imagined in them.

We are building the ruins.  
It is taking forever.  
This is what gives us time

to do it thoroughly.  
Walls won't hide the wealth forever.  
The lifts will stop ascending.

The ruins will be shattered vowels  
and last unbreakable consonants  
left for latecomers to imagine

what might have been said  
from a second-story window  
on a Sunday morning late in April

when a woman called from the street  
Elena! Elena! —  
to her friend above.

We are building the ruins.  
The work is never finished.  
We will leave almost nothing in our wake.

We are building ruins upon ruins.  
We do this for our children.  
Dusk will eat the day.

Night will teach us its gnomonic lessons.  
Our bed sheets still repeat the pattern:  
Each morning bed a crumpled ruin.

Elena, leaning over her red geraniums  
on her window sill calls back down to her friend  
in a voice that carries all that will be ruined.

KEVIN BROPHY