

MOTHER, ANY DISTANCE GREATER THAN A SINGLE SPAN

Mother, any distance greater than a single span
requires a second pair of hands.

You come to help me measure windows, pelmets, doors,
the acres of walls, the prairies of the floors.

You at the zero-end, me with the spool of tape, recording
length, reporting metres, centimetres back to the base, then leaving
up the stairs, the line still feeding out, unreeling
years between is. Anchor. Kite.

I space-walk through the empty bedrooms, climb
the ladder to the loft, to breaking point, where something
has to give;
two floors below your fingertips still pinch
the last one-hundredth of an inch ... I reach
towards a hatch that opens on an endless sky
to fall or fly.

By Simon Armitage