

A good axe

From the collection "NEXT Poems 2016–2021"

For Rob

The gift of a good axe:
conversations with the wood.

If it hears, it doesn't listen,
but I try to pay attention

to what each billet says for itself,
or implies about us both.

Cross-grained? Well-seasoned?
Willing to work together?

Tok! uttered with confidence
makes the split halves leap apart,

and tells, too, what I've done right,
while puk? strikes a note of doubt,

and puh... warns me we're wasting time.
On my part, it's Hmmm... and aha...

or unh, as I free the blade, reading
the cuneiform for my own defeat –

but there, at the woodpile, that's life.
We learn to stand. The air sings. Tok!

Alan Roddick