Two Mind Parables: I: The Inventor, II: The Plumber

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I The Inventor

The painting spans three panels,
The first, in grays,
Depicts two men in lab coats
Adjusting a machine,
A spray of wires and chrome valves,
A stained rag pressed into the base.
The one is calculating and serene,
The other, his coat discolored,
Draws a glance at a console of meters.
In the background
Cloth covered shapes abound.

The colonial windows in the second scene
Drop soft highlights over the family
Arranged in the furniture,
A series of captain's chairs,
Brass chandeliers,
And a fireplace with birch logs.
The inventor reclines in the foreground
Facing the factories to the east.

In the third scene
Subtracted by some feet from the rest,
A squat building dominates
Covered with an ash dust.
The building has no windows.
The skyline has no trees.
II The Plumber

Who was the thin man
Infamously mute
That worked all day
Beneath a swirl of pipes
Lurking there with mammoth tools.

He thought of the motion of the pipes;
Of the tangled elbows circuiting the dark,
Of the thin runners feeding the house
Fractured with a wrench.

I watched him half the day
Behind the furnace
Close each bend for pay;
My flower print disrupted
The damp air radically—
Would he have some lunch?

But the children admired him most.
The emergency,
The floor covered with water,
Enticed them like firemen.
But he remained aloof
Knowing their delusions thoroughly.