Poet Stuart Kestenbaum of Deer Isle is director of the Haystack School of Crafts, one of the state’s cultural treasures. His poem for this week remembers his father, a Mr. Fix-It who couldn’t.

Mr. Fix-It
by Stuart Kestenbaum

My father never made anything or fixed anything, even though we had the obligatory tools in the basement, the beautiful hand drill that belonged to my great grandfather the carpenter, the once-used brushes and the mysterious cans of paint and shellac. And he never cooked anything either, never turned the coffee pot down to perk, never cracked an egg and only once that I remember barbecued steaks, the smoke rising to heaven like a burnt offering from the charred remains. When he returned home at night, the smell of gas and oil still close to his clothes, he’d settle on the couch finishing a New York Times crossword puzzle while keeping track of the Yankees on TV, until he fell asleep, only to rouse when I’d change the channel. “I was watching that,” he’d mumble, though asleep, and I’d believe him, but now I think he wasn’t there but had been at his domestic work, the night shift, dreaming the lives of his children, building a house of words, writing the perfect story whose ending we never get to.

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