

LI

It is Easter.
The widow wakes up to rain
on the roof. The basement is flooded.
The furnace is out.
"The only thing that is risen here
is the water," she says to herself.
"Once I was an egg.
A soft vulnerable X.
Possibly capable of parthenogenesis.
Then I was penetrated
by a renegade Y.
Then I developed into this ...
a widow. But before then,
I wasn't a widow.
Before then I was a sun
lighting up the dark descent
into the fallopian tube.
I was autonomous.
I had come from forever."
"What a lot of drivel you are
talking," says the muse.
"Just quit it...which
came first, the chicken or the egg?"
The widow looked thoughtful.
"Actually," the widow says,
"I think it was the rabbit."

— Ruth Stone

Ruth Stone (1915-2011) was an American poet for whom recognition came late. She was a teacher and writer, the author of 13 collections of poems, and a winner of the National Book Award (2002) and the National Book Critics Circle Award. *What Love Comes To: New and Selected Poems*, Copper Canyon Press, 2008, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize (2009). "LI," reprinted here, is from a collection of poems in which she examines widowhood.