

Teruko Anderson-Jones

Any Darkness

You watch the mouse in the cage,
going around and around on its wheel,
and you think *that's my mother*, how she's been
spinning away from all of us for years

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The Sunday drives, every autumn, one hundred miles north.
Undofling from the back seat of a Sunbeam
into the bright gold air,
wandering around while she took pictures, pieces
of landscapes. She painted and regularly then,
mornings and evenings, bookended around her job at the bank.
You would watch them reappear,
those trees and rocks, and you learned
how paintings hold time better than photographs;
drifting off to sleep to the smell of turpentine
the sound of brush strokes on canvas

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The Sunbeam belonged to "Uncle" Ian, though he wasn't
an uncle at all, but her married lover. His wife
didn't seem to mind as he practically lived with us
for seven years, 'til he called one morning
at two o'clock to say he'd left her for another mistress

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The scent of the framer's: freshly peeled wood,
white powdered dust that left a soft film
on your hands. Hammers ringing in other rooms,
shaping ornate borders for her clouds.
Clouds were her passion when all the sky
she could see was funnelled between buildings downtown.
Let loose on the weekend,
up north with her sketchbook and the windowless sky

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In any darkness
there's a risk of getting lost. Even
small darkneses. You were there once.
Everything seemed at a distance,
others going about their lives
unobstructed in blue spaces of sky.
And you so deep underground,
tunnelling your way through
to clarity, though you didn't know it

at the time, didn't think
you were going anywhere but down

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A hallway without doors;
koans you have to break through

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The emotional disturbance
was always there, but mitigated
by her art; a forgiveness talent warrents.
When the paints dired up it became
more noticeable, difficult to bear
as the abandoned paintings to her mind

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You can see it in other too. They talk,
but there's no place left in their eyes

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You know that one day it will stop.
And the darkness that's gone before
won't matter: just the remnants
of love compressed into that moment,
the paintings on the walls
holding what the artist saw