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Ryan Hitchcock

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When Grandparents Moved from the Puget Sound to Palm Springs

Ryan Hitchcock

Grandmother had gone to bed in
another hallucinatory freakout.
Her half glass of coca-cola
under the kitchen fluorescence,
ice cubes, cloudy and sticky,
amber dregs, quiet fizz, tasteless in the fearful air,
outside and inside dry.
It rains here rarely, where rain is remembered often.
The yacht Grandpa used to sail
fills the cement space of the garage
among his miniature boats
with whispery stiff sails
and delicate little lines
and innards which whirl with their tugging.

Bright crab skins fade with memory,
crabs crawling misplaced on a lawn,
crabs dying in convulsions grasping the knife,
crabs falling asleep in the pot.
All of which seems so distant,
in this white place,
which retains the old furniture,
and just one second perhaps, in the doorway, in the smell of them,
is reborn.

Like rising smell of summertime rain on black asphalt,
the paternal welcoming wisdom,
which knew the best thing to do with garbage was to burn it,
and which set rooms off limits,
yet slowly and seductively forgot the taboos.
So many myriad memories,
like the crystallized sifting

organs of a sand dollar.
A forgotten destiny,
to subsist off blackberries in the woods,
within mossed and collapsing houses,
entertained by the sea.
Such dreams,
fed by these grandparents,
which have changed, one more, one less,
and now reside where the greatest excitement
lies in discovering,
hidden among the red leaves,
something I never knew existed:
The miniscule red and green mouth
of a poinsettia blossom.