White Curtains Hang In The Front Room, The Floor Bare And...

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White Curtains Hang In The Front Room, The Floor Bare And…

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay’s first paragraph.

"White curtains hang in the front room, the floor bare and scuffed from the endless shuffling of six pairs of shoes. In the left corner sits a small, narrow bed covered with a tan afghan and part of another. A small portable TV also sits on the bed, and in the center of the tan wall is a light bulb in a fixture."

Cover Page Footnote
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An afternoon
indoors
when a mildew of dumbness
covers the tongue
when now is the mute flash
and dozing drone of television
or the traffic outdoors
or an ashy gray of forgetfulness.
An afternoon for the silent death
of a household pet.
The poet could seize a filmy shred
of this afternoon
could roll it on her tongue and taste
expectancy in its bland tragedy.
The poet could see expectancy rise
outside the living room window.
The pale and tremulous face
it watches. Then,
shrugging, shrinking, it apologizes
like an ex-lover and fades. Traffic slow and
unrelenting, the poet's arm
hangs white from the sofa,
she is sleeping.
On the television, lovers' faces
do not fade, do not watch.
The hamster is in the hamper.
Sleep, and expect to forget.

K.H.

White curtains hang in the front room, the floor bare and
scuffed from the endless shuffling of six pairs of shoes. In the left
corner sits a small, narrow bed covered with a tan afghan and
part of another. A small portable T.V. also sits on the bed, and
in the center of the tan wall is a light bulb in a fixture.

A large, double-chinned woman sits on a plain chair near the
bed. Her huge white legs jut out from navy polyester shorts.
Knee socks anchor the varicose veins into once white sneakers.
Mousy tan hair frames her face, and it's hard not to notice the
gray pleading eyes. Shebrightens when she sees her son, but her
smile fades as they talk.

She begins quietly, telling of her dying father while the son
shuffles from room to room half paying attention, half
remembering how the house used to be.

He moves deeper into the house, her voice growing stronger.
She complains about not receiving phone calls and how awful
the lawyers are who are taking care of the estate. He says that
he has tried to call. She looks at me, the stranger her son never
introduced, while I wish he would come back.

He returns. They discuss his grandfather in Kansas. His
birthday is coming soon, her son says shoving his hands into his
pockets, and most hang on until their birthdays. I try to melt
into the wall, thinking about my own grandfather. Tears come
to my eyes and I brush them away.

She sits up, leaning towards her son and the closed front
windows. But he is at the door saying we must go. She opens
her mouth and then closes it. Could you check the oil in the
cadillac, she says. He goes out the door talking about a
sprouting maple or oak and then checks the oil. She follows,
still talking.

The hood drops and he turns and climbs onto the
motorcycle, nodding all the while. She stands by the red
cadillac. She waves, and we are gone leaving her to sit in her
house and finish her white afghan. He starts the motor and
pulls away while she talks.

M. Sharon Murphy

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