

# After Midnight

For Harry the cat

After *Midnight* by Ian Burgham

I take a boat hitched to my front door,  
tell Harry it looks like a storm is coming.

He knows I am leaving.

He retreats to his not-so-secret hideaway  
underneath the dining room table, above the boxes.

I am not seaworthy.

I close and lock the door, row to work.  
When I return, he has disappeared.

When he reappears behind the couch  
he has questions for me.

I was looking out the window, he says,  
when I saw a skyline of skeletons,

a waterfall, the dead dog-paddling  
to the sound of the ticking kitchen clock.

They are exiled from their crypts,  
on a pilgrimage. Why?

They want to be memorable,  
I tell him, putting out fresh water.

The spires are the eyebrows  
of a fallen giant raised in prayer.

There is a reassurance in the black arts.  
A calm sea does not stay that way for long.

Harry knows I am learning—  
I am a sailor leaving wet footprints on a shore.

Harry knows moonlight, moments.  
His black and white markings, a message.

He knows the weightlessness of space,  
other words for breath, the violence of discovery.

Harry sits on the top of the sofa  
looking out the window  
as if it were stuck on the fish tank channel.

While I'm at work:  
early light. Beams stretch, move, fade.  
Water splashes against the embankment.

All fish metaphors are wet.

To Harry, the apartment is recognition,  
plateaus to lie on, a graveyard where  
every piece of furniture is a tombstone.

And the water keeps rising.

This poem appeared in: *Tesseract's Twenty: Compostela*  
Edge Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing  
Fall 2017, pg. 100-101 | ISBN: 978-1-77053-148-2