

Mable

The old woman who shrinks each year
uses a chair to reach the cat food.
This is not dying she says, but wisdom.
The stories she tells are of war and depression,
of the shaggy blue carpet and matching drapes.
She hasn't left those days of scrimping and saving.
Her income from five dollar piano lessons
to the neighborhood children
buys pudding pops and flowers.

I sit in her living room for hours
staring at a butterfly captured between two doilies,
flattened and beautiful.
The colors are the brightest shades of fall.
Music boxes lay delicately decorated
in pastel roses and ballerinas
one on every table.
The dusty green house
keeps the constant ticking of a pendulum

atop a dark wood piano
I sit next to time
randomly touching the keys below with bare toes.
One day I asked her if she was afraid to die.
This is not dying she said but music.

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