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Dennis Ross

Love Lost But Not Forgotten

He wanders, legs uncertain, on his slow
nightly walk, no laughter, no warm fire,
just aching aloneness, familiar, drifting
almost unrecognized through his thoughts.

Thousands of cold stars stare down,
and a distant owl hoots eight times,
waiting, ruffled silent wings ready
for something to move. No love there.

For him only a drifting emptiness
where love might have settled and nested,
gone twenty years now, it lost its way
in the familiar South Pacific sky,
leaving only a large pile of letters
now beyond her capacity to write.

She sits in a large soft chair in her allotted
antiseptic room after the stroke, after
the broken hip, an ocean, half a world away.
Was it father or brother who just left?

She should know . . . all this confusion . . .
the nurse smiles with her mouth only.
The machine makes a breathing sound
like someone with welcoming arms nearby.

Through mist she remembers a time
on Godley Head, gusting wind, sea cliffs
down to the Pacific, beginning love.
Did the wind tear it away? Did they
stumble, shatter a precious vessel?

The Lady in the Painting

I drink my latte as my melancholy
wanders through the coffee shop window
away from the seventies-era jazz, the two
customers, and the sleepy barista.
Heat ripples the apartment building
across the street desolate in the baking sun,
nothing moves, no cars or people.

My mind drifts to Hopper's "Lady in the
Automat" and her quiet melancholy
as she sits in her green coat trimmed
with fur and stares down at her coffee cup.
She seems lost, an abandoned child,
appears to feel exactly as I do, and reaches
across ninety years and half a continent
to touch my resonating humanity. We
should sit together and talk awhile.

Dennis Ross's work has appeared in *Hurricane Review*, *Listening Eye*,
Iconoclast, *Illuminations*, *Passages North*, *White Pelican Review*, and
many other publications. His chapbook, *Relatives and Other Strangers*,
is available from Finishing Line Press.