Martina Dalton

MIDNIGHT AT THE SALTMARSH

Gallery Books

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for John

Because Her Wedding Had to Be Postponed

What I think of now is how, on that morning
underneath the cherry blossom tree
you planted as a child,

a blackbird gathered bits of moss
her mate had plucked
and left to dry.

Confetti drops of petals
that were strewn,
she brought them to her nest.

And the photo that you posted online,
of the little branch, that he had walked
five miles to find —

you'd placed it in the jug
you'd brought back from Japan.
And the simple cloth you lay it on.

Above the two of you, the firmament
without a single aeroplane
bringing newlyweds away, or coming in.

The blue and empty sky unscarred.

Heron on the White Line of the Motorway

In that instance all he was was eye,
wings shoved in pockets behind his back,
sorry he could remember how they spread
just yesterday

above that golden field,
the river's span.
All eye of storm, the fields around him spin,
are drawn to him,

to his mistake.
Stuck to the road, he hides the blood
that must be turning tarmac red,
legs his only means of taking off

now broken underneath him.
It's stupid to rely on such fragile things:
to think he could belong
to other than the sky!

With nowhere left to hide he does
what he has practised all his life.
Stoic and still. Grey as concrete
or the lining of the moon.

The View

And I know now
that there are more years
behind me than ahead;

places I will no longer visit,
and I am OK with that.
I remember every day

how it looked.

The Lake

The lake was so still that evening
all my favourite things mirrored:

the mountain, the eye of the bridge,
the frozen upper lough;
a perfect circle of snow.

Excruciating to look at now
with all that had gone before:

the storm that split the oak in half,
the fisherman's boat reduced on grass
to painted planks of wood,

the chains beneath the bridge
I had held so tightly the links
left rust marks on my wrists.

How unnecessary it all seemed.

And I am wondering now
if there were always two lives,
one imagined and one given,

as the sky exists
in the lake's reflection,

if it was all for this moment
as though everyone could see it.