

Moving Day

By Peter Branson

For Aunty Win

Before they reached the bridge
she saw the boats,
begged them to stop.

She knew the way the breeze
stirred them to life,
relaxed then taut again
against their mooring rights.
They shoaled small daubs
of light across the wides
like herring schools.

She wrote the message carved
into the slab below
the massive coping stone.
'My age', she murmured
at the number 68 ...
'We had a boat like that
after the war.'

They started off
back down the telescope's
cruel eye, concealed
behind a bank of cloud;
both hands loud round
the handle of her bag;
white knuckle ride,
that frightened fey
behind the eyes.

'She doesn't know
my bloody name!' he snapped,
so angry with the world
he'd known and her.
'Stop that!' she warned.
Children who swear
deserve a smack.'

Outside himself, he laughed.
'Perhaps she could have coped?'
his partner asked.
First time they'd found her out
he'd thought her drunk.
Eventually they talked
the doctor round.

'Well this is really nice.
It's ages since
we've been out in the car':
smile of content,
then warned her husband
of the road ahead
and him already
more than ten years dead.

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