

Mary Wickham

Making Room

for AW

The miraculous sack that is my kangaroo pouch
is crammed with a lifetime of lifetimes.
Those whose minds died before their bodies
huddle here with the winsome who shrank to covered bones,
snug against wounded strays and injured ideologies.
Imprints linger in the warmth where the hale leapt to their own life,
and plans, thriving, in good time slipped from my keeping.

The marbled pink membrane inside the furry coat
is like nothing more than the confectioned panels
of the Florence Duomo where I walk today—
pink shiny skin, smooth and pulsing, the teal tinge
intricate veins of blood and rivers of nutriment.
The four teats within a kangaroo's pouch
are designed variously according to the age and condition
of the one who seeks succour, such is the marvel of nature.
Mine are almost empty of kindness,
empathy viscous after years of flow
to the preludes and postscripts of the aged and ailing,
sorting crockery and brooches, assigning pets,
sifting books and settling memories, theirs and mine.

It is the sky that reacts to today's topsy-turvy news—
the out of kilter acceleration of a tiny life—
as the narrow streets pour in hyperbolic drench.
Around the glistening Santa Maria del Fiore
domed umbrellas of a hundred colours bloom,
queued for Botticelli or waiting for David.

She will not live beyond several years,
she has at three months reached her zenith,
and from her slides life like rain down glass and stone,
gushing over gutter and gully and weeping the Tuscan hills.
Her Primavera is nipped in the bud, and David waits in vain,
such is the cruelty of nature,
a minuscule genetic anomaly atom bomb.

She is not mine to carry,
she is not mine alone or even mainly, to love,
she is not mine, yet of mine, to grieve.
I do
and will.

Loss seizes us as the seizures scorch loss in her.
Resigned but railing, incredulous, reeling,
I nudge a couple of chronic squatters along inside the pouch,
evicting one right here by the Duomo,
making room for her and hers, all ours,
vowing whatever comfort can be found and given,
intent on learning from her,
our winged champion of love,
before the long flight home across the world.