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No talk of death here tonight
or the corrosion of arthritic bone,
or rupture of a frail heart.
Only whispers of a fishing artist;
his leather fingers tracing
the weathered fibre framed
in a grey river clay.

A mind sorts through
shopping lists for practice.
Under rules prescribed by mother
when he wore shorts and brown shoes
to Sunday mass; their patterns punched
in the patent leather toes like storm swirls
in a kitchen strainer.

It is exercise time again.
Rhymes are listed out in colour,
collections of oil pastel word
combinations, and bits of fiddle tunes,
and recitations sounding and kisses all run over
and over again beneath the blaze
of the plug in kerosene lamp.

Behind clenched eyes
the cove is lead again.
His fist feels the patina
that smudges out the moon's white light,
it holds blinds on the Gunning Point.
He sees how wounded birds balance
on the running-down-side of the harbour swell.

Forgetting what it's like when he slips
on dark stone. A mind folding in again
on the flat of its back, the harbour rootless,
warm drool soaks the hospital pillow;
perhaps the nurse will change it
in the morning when she feeds him mother's porridge