

Grand Prize

The Absent Caretaker

by Erin Knight

Time had stolen away, three years spent
Each in their stealthy, soundless way.
Time doesn't obliterate memories the way my mother used to say
When she reassured me that wounds would heal.

I had believed time shaped a cavern of space between us
Each day the distance between us was expanding;
Drifting away from the day when I could have predicted
Each movement – each deed, each word spoken.

But I witnessed the wrinkling of his cobalt eyes
When his head spun towards me three years later.
Knowing my voice he hastened to my side;
Placing the velvet of his palm against mine.

My mother always said let time pass.
Time would temper all, smooth the edges of our loss
And yet I loved the starkness of this new scar,
The crisp sting of his instant forgiveness.

Maybe the deepest scars are charms
Smoothed by the caress of soft palms and slow fingers.
Maybe vast caverns are illusions we fashion
To allow ourselves the freedom to forge new paths.

Maybe healing is an unforgetting
As we delve into our history,
And find that time will always lead us home.