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Junk, and: A Moment

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Junk

The rusty hills of iceboxes
mattresses' swollen ripped bellies
still grinding engines rusty
razor blades reflecting a discarded
kingdom of gurgling toilets
stinking up our backyard
where rats sought refuge
the gum bumps my knees scraped
under my third grade desk
the spinning red stools' tops
at the Model Diner where I sat
alone each endless school day
among blistered forests of
thumbs shadowed eyes shaky hands
going and coming from Bonds
DuPont's and Bausch Lomb
the icy Genesee Falls I skipped
rocks off playing hooky nowhere
else to hide except maybe Main
Street cracking under the weight
of its own lethargy the static voices
announcing Saturday's Yankee games
all the way from New York City
the Friday night drunks waltzing
outside Ringo's Bar & Grill kids
lining up to peep into Susie's
older sister's second cousin's
bathroom window the pasties
swirling inside Fancy Abe's neon lit
den of iniquity Grandma angry at

the goose-stepping newsreels showing
Europe burning the stampeding buffalo
in Panavision the empty cemetery plots
waiting patiently after Father died
Moses's furious brows staring down
from the peeling Big Shul ceiling
Mother whispering an off-key dementia
lullaby not recognizing my wife or
her grandchild though I looked familiar
the fireworks over Lake Ontario every
Fourth of July promising everything would
be OK the old Polish woman screaming
on the downtown bus even after
everyone got off like she could see
what was coming Grandma talking
in Russian to someone in her sleep
who wanted to burn her house down
the musty tools books and clothes
in the unheated back room the orphan tin
on the kitchen door the tiny never smiling
rabbi who came every other Tuesday
the snow burying all the unhappy houses
the stained-glass attic window where I sat
counting all the hours before I could leave

A Moment

A measurement of time
in which dogs live
without regret
or desire to enhance
their reputation
and personal worth.
An idea designed
to shelter contentment
and regulate fretfulness.
A request for calm
and further reflection.
A pause or hesitation
used as a defense
against a horrid memory
or fear of the corner.
A stall for time
in order to regain
one's reasonableness
and equilibrium.
An allotment
requested by those
who've used up
their other options.
A plea for calm.
A ubiquitous cave
of sanity. An end
without
a beginning. A room
in which bad news
resides. A wall
behind which

nothing more
waits to happen.
A desperate limitation.
A grain of sand.
A last breath.
A vast opportunity.
A plea to begin over again.