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Neck of the World

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THIEVES

The brain has a drawer
named *home*: the trees shine,
appetite and wonder mingle.
A soldier sits carving an auk
from elephant ivory.

His lips purse downward
in pursuit of the knife's fitness:
the certain peel each slice
rings out toward the handprint
smear on the window, its oil
blooming on the wind. One
door has been nailed shut.

The hand is off somewhere, adrift
from the gripstone of the heart.
A cabinet and dresser
moan in a back room, rocking
the light bulbs into streaks.
The wind dips low in searching.

The soldier knows wealth
lies three corridors behind
the brow, dying slowly as a steer.
The strangers step one after one
to the gates of childhood—
cells shrink back at their touch.