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Mirages, and: Mice Dart over the Drafty Floor

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MIRAGES

Translated from the Swedish by Christian Gullette

The neighbor's balcony door stands open the whole day,
airs out a party that unraveled all night.
Fine mist. Thick newspaper inserts.
Slow breakfast. Taking my time.
I sew on a shirt button with white thread,
straightaway it meets the needle's eye.

The long beaches that have learned to live with water,
to brave its moodiness and vanity,
allow themselves to be soaked and abandoned,
see their destiny in the borderline's eternal dilemma.
Whoever runs along a beach
is always the last man on earth,
the last to witness freedom's impotence
disappear in one forward line.

There's joy in this soil
that refuses to sprout.
There's no such climate.
Maybe the summer meadow will survive,
at least for a few decades;
the ninth of August it will be culled with a scythe.
Until then, longing's wildflowers flex in the wind:
ox-eye daisy, spotted cat's ear, bluebell, quaking grass.

JONAS MODIG

MICE DART OVER THE DRAFTY FLOOR

Translated from the Swedish by Christian Gullette

Mice dart over the drafty floor
investigating cracks in the sapwood,
waiting in the darkness to sample
the edge of a yellowed newspaper
and gnaw away last summer's
celebrity gossip. No one comes and disturbs
the short winter days that disappear
in a hollow of falling snow.
Frost creeps into this vacancy,
labors breathing and barricades the door,
the slow chill's long lockdown
under a choleric sun.