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The Spare Bedroom

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THE SPARE BEDROOM **VALARIE SMITH**

What does it feel like behind that door
at the end of the hall, in that nosebleed
section of the house? No matter how small,
we fill our extra corners with fake ferns
and peace lilies, a lonely aloe vera plant.

We say we need an extra room
to keep the next guest in a plush bed
of shiny sheets and sham comforters,
with two formica tables, and a wall clock
permanently saving time.

Here is the door we pass by and peek in,
toss old furniture, lightbulbs, and pens,
the door for future guests to pass through
to the afterlife, waiting for memories
to live and die over the weekend.

Inside, that one window looks nowhere,
draped lightly like a mosquito net,
a corner view obscure, a fortress secure,
a mausoleum for one dead fly in the sill,
lifeless, except dust mites bathing in sunlight.

Sheltered out of the elements,
captive like mice in the wall, we tiptoe,

THE SPARE BEDROOM

SMITH

listen for the thinness. Light creeps in,
touching the feet of passersby as if to ask,
who will stay and when?