

Odile, The Black Swan

Impossible to look at her without thinking dark water, depths
where light doesn't reach. In the diner on Dalhousie,
her presence commands the booth, though only the decrepit

at the counter sees the water rising, water-
line gurgling just beneath her chin. Flutter
of a dark wing that briefly stretches. Sally, a regular, orders

coffee between johns, eggs at 4 a.m. They arrive, sunny side
silicon perfect. Minivans line up to glean sorrow
from her eyes. If only I could dance, says Sally. When the sky

turns pink, she'll sleep. Odile once had an act involving lit black
candles and a snake. Smoke she could conjure on demand.
Rose on stage, an angel from the black lake.

They all desired her, but one. Before Champagne Rooms,
loose laws, when looking was enough—
She holds her mug as if it could contain her.

The transistor radio tin-tin-tins demented heart songs
tie a yellow ribbon ... and getting caught
in the rain... and I'll never have that recipe again...

Pale-skinned fries rise like broken limbs from plates, tendrils of vinegar
seep down. The scent is grease, acid, hot breath and chrome.
There are no new ways to be alone. There are no new ways to mourn.

UNA McDONNELL