

January Afternoon

In this gravelled alley, my son scurries
to pick up newly fallen oranges, the ones
unscalped by squirrels, unpecked by birds.

He is a whole three months
from six years old;
I am three months from forty-eight.

In my twenties, there was a moment
when I thought life would always be
a long corridor, narrow and endless.

We fill our blue backpack with large Navels,
and he pedals his Go Kart again,
me walking behind--dogs barking as we pass.

Suddenly I run past this boy,
gliding into my childhood again
as I slide across deep ruts sheeted by ice.

He remains seated, smiles, seeming
to like this brief slippage from my usual role,
but not inspired to do the same.

I want to look like a race car driver, he says,
feeding the teeth of his jacket easily into the zipper,
pulling it all the way up, so that his mouth is covered.

Because he's also pulled his hood
low over his forehead, I can barely read his eyes.
But this I know—he is smiling.

He is going to ride across the ice,
crack it all the way through, leave big fat tire marks
in the mud underneath.

TERESA McCOURT

"JanAfter12.cork" Theresa McCourt
Abalony@att.net

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