

Commended

- 'The One Room'
Alana Kelsall, VIC

The one room

for my sons

I sit under the apple trees and see the grey of the back fence
roses pruned down to stumps did you know
that hair grows even after death? I know about the cat
her sly poops behind the TV she's old now and grumpy
a dove cooing on the shed clinking
on razor thin feet if the birds are singing there'll be trees
a plane thunders down the Bell street corridor and banks
a magpie calls and I see the farm the lawns the steep
drop of my father's silences our heartbeats hanging
he said *don't-you-know-what-you're-getting-yourself-into?* as if
all that undertow can tie you in knots if you're good at smiling
nip it in the bud my mother had said indefatigable gardener
I sent them postcards from Japan waiting for the *chink* of keys
on the low table my Japanese husband reeling me in
we're looking at the same moon she wrote back
when I look up I feel so much closer
I looked down at her in the coffin
brushing her white hair with a baby's brush I thought
now you can stop growing if this is all one room
Rosellas screech among the ripening apples
I can't ask you to love the cat just help her that's all
your father waiting in the cold of the UK if I can travel lightly
photos on one side clothes on the other
giving away and making room I know how my parents felt
when I left holding the line where there wasn't one
but if you let the apple trees die . . .