Our Turtle Skeleton

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Ice caves have their crimes.
The light's loss is the dark's gain.

We found a turtle skeleton, encased by sutured shell,
the skeleton that held the strength,
with eye sockets making ponds of our light.

A remnant of a dark walk into hibernation
in a pressurized hole, fortunate in knowing
warm sleep must be there, beyond aged blindness,
perhaps just beyond the base
of the next iced stalagmite.

She must have tasted memory of the last insect still
as bat sleep. Deliberate toenails scraping
ice tracks, pull push drag of cooling,
tired legs, following a hard snout
fixed on seasonal and dull, soft muck instinct

and denying an icy, unswum stream
as a bad joke like drained lakes,
finally fixing ear on a stalactite
whose waterdrops held nitrogen taste,
too late knowing she was too far below warm earth.

Her long walk too far into hibernation
from which no spring comes on insect wing,
frosted out in dreams of sun-baked mud
and itch of dragonfly wings touching shell,
its covering now peeled to chitin leaves.

Struggling to split her deadlocked jaw
and leak from hollowness of a frozen head
sweet water dreams, Dutch winds on virgin dikes.

This cavernous dying that slept herself to God.
Or perhaps a dying that swept God to her.