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## Leaving

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# LEAVING

Susan B. Auld

*Take my hand*, you yelled.  
Your voice colliding with the thunder's roar  
pushed me onto the covered bridge, stumbling  
to escape another summer storm,  
a forewarning, a rumbling echo  
pounding in my chest  
demanding release.

I peered over to the far side,  
one hand wiping rain from my eyes,  
the other holding the rough railing for support  
anticipating another endless journey  
on splintered planks worn bare and creaking.  
*Let go*. I whispered. Both hands now free.

*Hurry, take my hand*, you urged.  
Your words, shattered by light,  
flickered silent as the grumble grew faint,  
and sun streamed for a moment through the roof's slats.  
I turned, to look back for that moment,  
noticing a path I had blindly passed,  
illuminated by sun streams that fell  
through heavy leaves onto a grassy walkway.

*Go ahead*, I said.  
My words punctuated the pause in the storm,  
strengthening the peace of silence.  
I stepped off the bridge and turned away  
from your silent hand  
outstretched and empty.