The Blind Locksmith

Terry Trowbridge

For the blind locksmith
jigsaw puzzles are prayers.
His retirement is spent fingering little
quadrangle keys with teeth on all four sides.
Jigsaw puzzles turn his tabletop into
flat five hundred piece worlds made out of keys freed from locks.
Five hundred keys that fit into each other.
A perfect plane of keys, properly fit
so that tumblers are superfluous.
The unseen picture is an inchoate tribute
to a lifetime of key cutting and lock setting.
The puzzle box sits on his knee
like five hundred rosary beads to enlighten him.

For the blind locksmith,
jigsaw puzzles are nightmares.
His dreams are filled with quadrangles that are
square locks with tumblers on all four sides.
He cannot read the box to know how boxboard
pieces will turn in his fingers, rotating left and right.
The nth frustration of a lifetime of skilled clicking,
he cannot remember if he held this one up to this one already.
After sorting, the edge pieces fence a rectangular promise
of a world of locks that fit locks but shut no doors.
There are countless setbacks that he will have to overcome.
The puzzle box sits open on his napping knee,
spelling a braille of uncertainty
over whether it is a bulwark against fading skills
or a bulwark against admitting the need for closure.

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