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Liz Ciampa-Leuzzi
An Open Door

Yesterday, as I worked at revising a poem,
A tap-tap-tap sound began at our front door

It sounded like a staccato someone
Had arrived, unannounced, and so I got up

To see about the visitor. I looked out
The right side window, through the translucent lace panel

Strung tightly across the panes. Nothing.
Then I peered out the left side window, just to be sure.

The light knocking continued. Flabbergasted, finally
I knocked on our door from the inside, thinking that if some

Strange ghost had come to call, he or she would surely understand
My odd behavior. One look out the right side window again

Gave me a unique view of a small black bird with tiny white spots,
Beating his wings. Perhaps exasperated by my lack of hospitality,

He flew away. The staccato rhythm stopped.
That night, in a dream, I ran down the stairs from the second landing

To see an ocean of white light flowing into our house from outside.
The strength of the light had flung the front door open, wide.

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East Boston, Back Then

Today I imagine him in an East Boston dance hall
Back in his prime, in the late 1940s, the early '50s,

Because it must have been where he learned
To waltz like that. To tango, swing, even to jitterbug,

But, mostly, to waltz to the big band—
Not to the digitally remastered recordings that

I listen to today. No. Instead, he hears the real thing, live:
The brass section. Those horns. The whinnying trumpet.

The onslaught of drums just before the singer—
Sinatra, Bennett, even a good baritone from the neighborhood—

Blessed with the velvet big band voice, takes over,
But just for a bit. The crooner gives the crowd a taste, then

Ever the gentleman, he hands the night back to the band
While the piano proposes transition with light, thoughtful chords.

As the saxophone swells, the piano trills quietly in the background
And the other instruments take a step back,

The young man finds himself in the middle of "A Moonlight Serenade"
With a "Satin Doll" on his arm, and no matter what,

He and I—though it is sixty years later for me, today, his
Eighty-second birthday—realize, suddenly, that we are

"In a Sentimental Mood." I wasn't alive back then, but today, I can conjure him up:
The thick chestnut hair, the dark-brown eyes. The rhythm of his waltz,

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The way he looks at his partner: she glows. He radiates honesty, Strength and smarts and promise. A rare breed. Quite a man.