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In This Town We Rescue Cats

—*for Karim Ennarab*

Amid November's raid, the journalists at the office
learned to make paper boats to pass the time.

Suddenly there were as many boats as people,
except not one boat had a name.

It is November again.

The boats collect dust
in the corner of the newsroom.

We sip coffee, sniff each whiskered abscess
on the lips of our strays

as officers question the salted lines
around Karim's eyes.

In our quest for temporary exits
we name strays; we make homes

in our terrible freedom,
which blinks, which

mortifies us.

To pass the time, we strain questions
like water through a round

mesh riddle.

Here, anything can be an editorial question.

Like can a piece of paper, however quaintly
folded, be a lifeboat?

Who takes a man,
post-swim, from the Red Sea,

who takes care of his strays?

We sip coffee, wipe peppercorns of grime
off the lips of our languid,

useless boats.

November again. The future
is a cold room with a bare bed frame.