

The Cat Beneath the Off Ramp

by Con Chapman

We stop, waiting for another train to come
out of South Station, and I put my book down
to look out the window. There I see a tuxedo cat
like the one I left at home eyeing

the woods from the slate patio. This one's
lying under the off ramp from the expressway,
on a blacktop walk between gray swards of crushed stone.
He's squinting into the sun



rising over the Atlantic, holding something
under one paw, contented. He looks down,

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peeks at what's beneath and lets it go;
a mouse, stunned from a blow for all I know,



who doesn't get far before the cat traps him again,
for sport. The cat lifts his head to sniff the breeze,
which bears no aroma of fish that I can tell. It's all diesel fuel

and the torque of wheel on steel rail,
the exhaust from above and the tunnel below.
He doesn't seem to care. Maybe he's forgotten
what woods like those behind



our house smell like, or never knew,
but this he knows; the scent of a mouse.
Like Smart's cat Jeffrey,
he's a mixture of gravity and waggery.

