

The Cave

By Paul Tran

Someone standing at the mouth had
the idea to enter. To go further

than light or language could
go. As they followed
the idea, light and language followed

like two wolves—panting, hearing themselves
panting. A shapeless scent
in the damp air ...

Keep going, the idea said.

Someone kept going. Deeper and deeper, they saw
others had been there. Others had left

objects that couldn't have found their way
there alone. Ocher-stained shells. Bird bones. Grounded
hematite. On the walls,

as if stepping into history, someone saw
their purpose: cows. Bulls. Bison. Deer. Horses—
some pregnant, some slaughtered.

The wild-
life seemed wild and alive, moving

when someone moved, casting their shadows
on the shadows stretching
in every direction. *Keep going*,

the idea said again. *Go...*

Someone continued. They followed the idea so far inside that
outside was another idea.

Source: *Poetry* (October 2019)