

BETHESDA

1.

All winter I stayed away—
skirted, passed, never dared

I bought a pen at the zoo

enter—the fountain drained,
grass yellow, trees stripped—

when the lines I scored

but today we sit, the water
flows, a three piece band

in trunk and limb shadow

plays jazz and swing and we
speak of cities, language—birds

kept shifting moved away

alight on Bethesda's spread
wings three on one three

like the child screaming

on the other I set a napkin
free after a swirl and skitter

echo as his stroller rolled

it crossed the zig zag brick
touched a canvas foot wrapped

through the underpass

and folded tumbled on snatched
by the park ranger's claw

2.

To hear the language refracted
in your accent, in my—you said

and paperless I wrote this

I did not have an accent I did
not sound American but I've

on the coffee stained

spent my time too long envying
the language of others—Spanish

bag stitching the wet

lisps and Italian lilt, Croatian
clips the lovers' coo the same

tear its sepia edge

claim the child's repeated cry
or demand the syntax makes

with the attraction one

one stumble the emphasis
on thing or act wanting so

word feels toward another

desperately to learn to possess
a secret vocabulary only to discover

I had failed to learn my own
and I possessed that secret all along

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