

DESPITE THE LIGHT, THE PARK WAITED AND THE MUSEUM SLEPT

Low pressure bites New York. October ogles trees
dwarfed by stone and brick, window and iron, copper
gone green, leaves gone copper. A metallic
light rattles the park, the colors

a lunch reminder : split pea soup and fresh bread,
o.j. and mocha at a communal table where nobody spoke
to their neighbor, intent on today's *Times*,
a sandwich, the changing light.

Central park holds the city at bay, a rectilinear island
of thinning shade, the zoo, its panther, those glacial rocks
just blocks away, but the path leads past
fifty newly wed Asian couples

photographers ping-ponging from red satin kimono
to white gown, attire unbound in a reflecting pool; past
grassy areas where, despite the bite, a lone
bather catches the sun's low

angle. Near this spot, on a warmer day, two gods
bladed by, gold and honey hair windblown, T-shirts
tucked like tails in their shorts, light stuck
on torsos and calves, motion

all muscle and round despite their height. Imagine
the sun smitten, chasing men through the park, her touch
pried off by shadows : a leaf, a branch,
a light pole. On the IMAGINE

memorial, a red carnation slices the IMA, petals
darkened in mauve blocks, a boot's tread. Pigeons people
the paths. A sudden sense of scale
wells up, surrounded by city

that is not city, city that has no sound, its silence
asleep under the benches' empty newspapers, in the swing,
slide, and spin of the quiet playground.
No vendors or amateur artists

line Museum Mile. A dark au pair walks a blond
child : sexless head of curls a bob alongside the empty
stroller. They pause : two museum guards
hoist the American flag back

to full mast despite the fact it is a Monday. Odd
to think a museum needs rest, contents always at rest
the city that makes a museum run at rest.
The guards rush a rusty shopping

cart from pole to pole, flags folded in a heap, red,
white and blue next to blue, white and orange, museum
insignia crushed against stars. On an orange
ladder, a man in tan overalls unties

a maroon exhibition banner; strings flap, a sudden
gap between columns overwhelms the short angles
between guards, ladder man, blond child,
well-dressed nanny. Me.

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