

At the Seam

Senior, Third Place

Museum

They placed me where sightlines tighten -
above the moulding,
just before the light shifts.

Bronze, hollow at the core,
raised on Derbyshire marble
banded with gilt garlands and small herms -

I am measured, numbered,
entered into ledgers.

Yet before the label,
before the careful Latin,
there is the pause.

That paltry hesitation
as a body crosses the line
it does not see.

House

They carry coats damp with London rain.
They speak in lowered tones that rise
when the breakfast room glows ahead -
china, silver, soft domestic light.

They cross from objects
to appetite.

Museum

I am fixed above the join.
Three faces turned to three directions
Do they stand long enough to see?

I have watched centuries metabolise into vitrines.
Fragments named, renumbered,
aligned under controlled sightlines.

He placed me here -
the architect of apertures,
the choreographer of revelation.
So that no passage occurs
unobserved.

House

They do not know they pass beneath
a goddess of crossings.

three presences turning through one pulse,
like a thought unwilling to choose a single
direction of light.

They see me as a statue.

Do they know my name?

Museum

I was once torch-bearer -
The torches are gone.

Once I held the key and rope of the underworld,
the blade of the Erinyes,
the serpent coiled with moonlight -

Have they forgotten?

Alcammenes first divided me ,
tripled the body, so that watchfulness,
could face every approach at once.

I have stood at crossroads
where dogs howled at the dark edge of fields,
where offerings smoked in shallow dishes,
where the living hesitated
before choosing a direction.

Where shall they go?

House

The threshold is narrower than a forest path,
yet they slow, instinctively.
Light alters.

Behind them: plaster casts,
marble torsos,
Roman heads without noses.

Before them:
tea, letters,
the domestic theatre of civility.

Museum

I am Artemis refracted,
Diana divided,

Hekate of the three ways -
huntress, moon-bearer,
keeper of the unlit gate.

My sleeves fall in patient folds.
Doric cloth clings and joins
with the drapery of my neighbour-self,
three bodies touching at the back
where the lines narrow and descend;

we are one and all but one.

No central pillar supports me
No kalathos anchors my spine.
Hollow at the core,
I stand without visible brace.

Absence holds me upright.

House

Children run beneath me
without lifting their eyes.
Scholars pause, sketching the gilt drum altar;
Boulton's Birmingham industry
lifting antique divinity.

Gilt metal under ancient bronze.
Enlightenment beneath moonlight.

They speak of provenance.
Of Trier, of Amiens,
of Rome's Capitoline bronze.

They do not speak of the way
the air cools at this seam of rooms.

Museum

I have been moved before.
Shifted in your lifetime
from niche to cabinet,
from study to stair.

I remained here.
above the doorway
between collection
and habitation.

Appropriately placed,
the note will say.

As if placement were accidental.

House

They pass from curated antiquity
to buttered toast.

From empire
to linen.

They cross as if crossing were nothing.

Museum

But I am the interval.

I am what stands between preservation
and use,
between relic
and breath.

Three faces for three tenses:
what was syncretised in Roman hands,
what was mounted in eighteenth-century marble
and framed by a nineteenth-century eye.

Time layers like my drapery.

Light arrives from the lobby,
circles my shoulders,
leaves toward the breakfast room.

It edits me.
I edit it back into shadow.

House

Some glance upward at last.
They see only statue material
They do not see crossroads dust,
nor the smoke of Hellenistic rites,
nor the dogs restless at the boundary of
fields.

They see a display.

Museum

Let them.

I have watched centuries cross beneath me
without moving.

Republics, restorations,
catalogues compiled and revised.

I will watch this house continue
to divide itself gently
public and private,
archive and appetite

and I will remain
above the seam,

triple,
hollow,
vigilant,

holding open the place
where one room becomes another
and every step, however domestic,
is a crossing.

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