

Outsider's Shovel

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An insider promises smoke will never
pollute the flag. The insider's pal
is a clapping machine popping up from his chair
and assuring the delegation the insider's plan
proves the flag cannot be fire.

A blast hits the hotel like bad booze in a waking head.
Over fallen hors d'oeuvres, I hurry to the avenue.
No one person is shouting in all the shouting.
Shattering glass falls from blistering windows.
A burning splinter scratches my ear.

An outsider stands among chairs
where lovers lunched under a friendly sun. I hear quiet,
as if her foot, dainty with the diligence of ballet,
pushes a silencer only she can press.

Her voice is calm as would be of a survivor
of numerous fires. Travel thins her shoes.
Her hair is twine tangled and smoky.
Her eyes are caves. Ash tints her brows.
Her only thing not charred is her satchel.

She says a promise is not a promise,
and a flag can burn, and no person is an island,
but people grow vegetables most juicy on an island
their diligence plows. From her satchel,
she throws seeds, unfolds a shovel.