

## *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.