Arts & Humanities

Poem: "Friendship"

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A last Roman dawn
glazes the windows,
like the isinglass
of his incomprehension.
Never to know someone,
in spite of many tries —

The cool odor
before the morning’s heat,
of crushed herbs, mint,
dust and water;
the fountain’s clatter
not awakened yet;

the new day
a faint blush in the east:
these things I know at least,
and how profoundly
the Palazzo Farnese
and its triple arch are lost

in darkness still,
while the towers of Trinità dei Monti,
are lit, slender and gray,
on the Pincian Hill,
and in the middle
distance, the Chiesa Nuova

offers its massive pediment
— like a geometer’s proof

of how he stood aloof,
always, from my intent,
protecting the integument
of a vulnerable self,

a sacred perimeter, really,
he would let no one cross,
behind which his ideas
kept him always company,
a golden empery,
a beautiful fastness.

I waited so long with
that leopard-colored gaze,
and carefully parsed replies
from that smiling mouth,
as if the slightest breath
intended more or less.

The *Messaggero* sign
glowed blue all night,
and yet I never got
the message, if there was one.
I waited alone,
and now it is too late.

The lantern on the dome
of Sant'Andrea will gather
light in its vessel of alabaster:
come, morning come.
It is time for me to go home.
Lead, heavenly light of my failure.

— Karl Kirchwey '81GSAS

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