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Last Sunday

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LAST SUNDAY

You were in the park last Sunday,
right. I was in the tea garden.
It's a fake I know
but I only take my wife

because it's quiet.
I imagine that you were dressed
tastefully, but with no concern
for style, sometimes in rags,

and usually standing next to
a highly polished piece of machinery
—light blue, motionless, on the red soil
found near construction sites.

Or you are sitting in a moon-lit garden
surrounded by the curling planes
of the huge modern sculpture
which is at this moment engulfing you . . .

You scream as loud as you can
but something happens to your voice
drifting through windows
so slowly . . . nobody hears you.

So I pay no attention.
So I get up quickly
as though I had forgotten something.
I walk past the turning heads

and out on the suspended porch.
With my elbows on the balustrade
I can look over the maze of artificial brooks
curling off in the moon-light,

as I discover you.
The writing does not go well.
I have probably had more education
but only you can speak beautifully.

Your Italian father
(the man who *called* himself your father):
one day he was climbing out of the tub
with the soap just slipping off

from the folds of his glabrous skin.
It was when your mother was away.
He was asking you for *that*
when you involuntarily screamed,

piercingly, and I came in.
On some pretext of course.
Only the present loneliness counts.
Only the present with your eyes

looking honestly into mine,
as now, frank and unsuspecting.
You were in the park last Sunday,
right. I was in the tea garden

standing on the suspended porch
overlooking the artificial brooks
that curl (perhaps in imitation
of delicate Japanese hieroglyphs)

toward a copse at the other end.
The figure is extremely complex
starting with the suspended porch
where I have just gone for a cigarette,

crossing the stone terrace below,
winding down the man-made stream,
curve after curve, to the copse.
Now we are lying there,

close, but perhaps too conscious
of all the artifice it required
to bring us together. "After all,"
you explain, "the writing has not

gone well either today or yesterday."
Now I am ashamed of breaking in,
on you, in the copse. I was furious.
I had often imagined you,

that's right, in my own image.
Only my loneliness counts.
I imagined that you were dressed
tastefully, but with no concern

for style, sometimes in rags.
In fact you were very smartly attired
as though you were doing quite nicely,
good circle of friends, etc.

And then we were walking
past some polished machinery, light blue,
It produced a nightmarish contrast
with the red soil of the construction site,

thus your scream of distress
—irrational, intense