

the HARLEQUIN

Ben Parker

Altered Life

Sleepless still at dawn you leave the house
to go where you can watch
rust spreading over exposed metal

like ink across cotton, the place
of bark visibly tightening around oak
and light that falls as slow as cooling pitch,

knowing that each afternoon
you will wake to hear yolk smother the white
in an empty kitchen.

In the eyes of strangers now
there is the shadow of an altered life
in which you were taken

to a country of pungent nameless meats,
music played on the bones of children
and markets that last for weeks;

where the sun is a glare on stone buildings
and priests bend their grey heads
to pray for the health of youthful gods.

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