

# Temples



The call to prayer beckons  
over loudspeakers atop minarets, those  
urban quotation marks, punctuating Istanbul.  
I perform the ritual ablation,  
cleansing my body in an attempt to  
purify the uncertain soul beneath.  
I enter the hall and lay down the prayer rug:  
it stretches across the carpet  
like a cat gently waking from a nap.

A pager emits a soft green backlight  
and chirps its birdsong:  
that familiar tune of duty and action.  
The surgical scrub is cold against my skin,  
and it lathers promises  
of success and failure, both imminent.  
I enter a sterile theater, its cold steel  
instruments lined on the tray like silent violins  
quivering in the anticipation of music.

And then the movement begins, flowing  
as naturally as the rosary follows prayer:  
as smoothly as a fresh blade cuts skin.  
A calm order falls in these two temples, and  
we execute the familiar choreography:  
the prescribed sacrifice of a perfect ballet.  
I dance at the altar of a God that has only  
ever sent me mischievous angels and I wonder  
what purpose there is to my supplication.

Then,  
It occurs to me that in each of these sanctuaries  
a grieving mother has wept on my shoulder,  
and I remember suddenly why temples are places  
of divinity.

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