Poem

On call

Giles Nicholas James Constable

The calls arrive throughout the night.
Hauled time and again to the surface
by the buzz and agitation of the device,
to talk into the screen's weak light,
listen to weary, urgent précis,
the presenting complaints.

Tales of crack inhaled, injudicious use of high proof booze,
mighty hits from a homemade bong;
of an abundance of tears, remonstrations,
acts of berating in public houses and squares;
of preludes to attempts at terminal acts,
contemplation of black water from a high arched bridge,
the standings on tracks, on a 12th floor ledge.
For some the buildings whisper low curses,
visions shape moonlit clouds,
the river releases a rolling lament.

Services have been summoned
to talk down, detain, convey to places said to be safe.
They tend to the streets with practised paid hands, shift-bound.
Concise and uninquisitive, I seek no motive cause,
no depth to the narrative,
advice offered as an emergency response,
bodger's fix, a shoring up.

A cloak fashioned of multiplied despairs
settles about me, mind cast out to tear-stained streets.
To those about to jump, to knife marks made,
tablets prepared, shards of a window broken,
hands held up to ward off early morning light,
to a face stained with blood, with lost hope,
all that will not be forgiven, unbounded regret.

The city is not asleep.
The night will not take me back,
adrift in a shallow of slumber.
An arriving rain throws gravel at the window,
a taut high voltage line of pain is pulled
in my head and when I do in the end dream
it is of an onrushing tormented crowd
who surge over the gate, scale the wall
to glower at me, many-eyed in anguish.
They mutter my name in imprecation,
aghast at the affront as I lie unminded in bed,
in the comfort of my soft and useless repose.

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