Fired

Sal Cetrano

You turn the knob, some antiseptic
alloy burnished in grainy sworls,
for the last time, and its static
touch centers the moment, waffles
the sick tensions, as your thoughts
race and flutter, lurch and derail.
For the first time, the elevator
comes too fast and falls non-stop.
Spilt like dice onto the curb, you
stare at spaces between buildings.

The nearest fountain's spray fails
to wake you up, slap your face,
dissolve a two-martini daydream.
Escape is a damp flannel suit.
You audition reasons, explanations,
break-even scenarios for those who
must know, **should** know, **might**
find out: permutations of failure.
Underfoot, the subway clatters.
You are hours early for the rush.

It dawns upon you suddenly
that you are an intruder, despite
your communion with the flow
and the assurances of worth,
old plastic-fantastic, stacked
chill and slick in your pocket.
Always, welcome stands provisional:

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capped smile, greased red carpet,
ivory hives where miracles happen—
another you, perfected, pivots
like a shark's tooth into place.