

But For This Passage Touched By Nothing

Enough to have heard there was once a Venetian glass chandelier
So large, so ornate, of the lightest soda glass, arabesques of leaves

Fired onto its many arms, so elaborate and delicate the only way
To get it to the New World was to hang it, floating, in the belly

Of a ship, submerged in water. It did not know what it was, chandelier,
Immersed in a sensory deprivation tank, unlit, never touching

The flanks of that vessel. It felt it was something there in the dark,
Could sense the swoons of many branches, some remnant of the torch,

The glass master's breath. Come to be a witness in the New World,
Suspended, raised in a penthouse high above the Park. It did not know

What it was—brain, or missile, or crown. Come to be a witness, on, off,
To the generations, an heirloom vesselled. But not yet. A pause,

A preparation. Unbelievably dark, not even a dripping. Tiers, stems, lush
Stems, the work of the furnace—sea shells, ashes, sand. But in the depths

Of the Atlantic, a not yet, it swung in water that wasn't the sea, quite,
Unaware of all it hung above, curved supple out of sand and ash, a creature

Of the deep. To be hung beneath the celestial murals, the gilded
Ceiling medallion, forever dusted with a long feather. But for this passage

Touched by nothing. A net looming through, without any catch.
To take shape as an impending occurrence, to sense the stilled blood

Of jewels, veins of internal amethyst loomed in. It did not know what
It was, halo, net, spiraled-out dying star. Not even a drip, just a groan

Of the muffled fathoms. Come to bear witness from a ceiling painted
With angels, come to hang high in the New City, in a tower sunk

Every morning in clouds. But for this voyage seen by nothing, a tomb
Or bride, the singular purpose of the ship, forever marked by this drag

Through the sea, bass note of the ocean held down long after.
Fire polished, it knew not what it was, heart, gown, or cage.

It could sense the chambers preparing. An heirloom, but not yet,
To hang above the feasts to come, the delicacies of the sea reappearing

Down the years, splayed open—oysters, caviar, crystal fountains
Of shrimp, octopus, the blue and black mussels on beds of ice,

The chandelier, so much older than us, scattering its underwater
Light. But not yet, it catches nothing, it does not dissolve, it is a hanging,

Unlit branches, a bouquet, swaying, carried, absent the cradle of arms,
But on its way, as bouquets always are. To be raised dripping, unlit, craned

Over the throngs in the new harbor, to be raised, dripping, a wreck,
A corpse, a mirror, to harden like ice to its ballroom purpose.

But not yet, go back, some remnant of the torch, it knew not what it was,
Sand and silt of the Old City, fired from the sludge of the shallow lagoons,

Raked to dry in sun, first sand and silt of the crumbling foundations,
Cathedrals sinking in the canals, shifting islets clasped only by bridges,

Torched ash of saints veined in gold threads, meal of the dragons' bones,
Masked face of the glass master, his secret, the burning saltworth marsh,

Spell of ash, poison, quartz—it did not know what it was, cave, fountain,
Or shroud, when in the ancient port of Venice it was lowered crank by

Crank into water, coffin or ghost, from the surface fading, ghost or lace,
It knew not what it was as they lowered it, hand over hand letting out

The ropes, into the sea—lung, piano, chandelier—but not yet. First this
Darkening, the glint of sinking, the letting out—anchor to a Floating City.