1970

Last Sunday

David Salner

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1011

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LAST SUNDAY

You were in the park last Sunday, right. I was in the tea garden. It’s a fake I know but I only take my wife because it’s quiet. I imagine that you were dressed tastefully, but with no concern for style, sometimes in rags, and usually standing next to a highly polished piece of machinery—light blue, motionless, on the red soil found near construction sites.

Or you are sitting in a moon-lit garden surrounded by the curling planes of the huge modern sculpture which is at this moment engulfing you...

You scream as loud as you can but something happens to your voice drifting through windows so slowly... nobody hears you.

So I pay no attention. So I get up quickly as though I had forgotten something. I walk past the turning heads and out on the suspended porch. With my elbows on the balustrade I can look over the maze of artificial brooks curling off in the moon-light.

David Salner
as I discover you.
The writing does not go well.
I have probably had more education
but only you can speak beautifully.

Your Italian father
( the man who called himself your father ):
one day he was climbing out of the tub
with the soap just slipping off

from the folds of his glabrous skin.
It was when your mother was away.
He was asking you for that
when you involuntarily screamed,
piercingly, and I came in.
On some pretext of course.
Only the present loneliness counts.
Only the present with your eyes

looking honestly into mine,
as now, frank and unsuspicious.
You were in the park last Sunday.
right. I was in the tea garden

standing on the suspended porch
overlooking the artificial brooks
that curl ( perhaps in imitation
of delicate Japanese hieroglyphs)
toward a copse at the other end.
The figure is extremely complex
starting with the suspended porch
where I have just gone for a cigarette,
crossing the stone terrace below,
  winding down the man-made stream,
curve after curve, to the copse.
Now we are lying there,

close, but perhaps too conscious
of all the artifice it required
to bring us together. “After all,”
you explain, “the writing has not
gone well either today or yesterday.”
Now I am ashamed of breaking in,
on you, in the copse. I was furious.
I had often imagined you,

that’s right, in my own image.
Only my loneliness counts.
I imagined that you were dressed
tastefully, but with no concern

for style, sometimes in rags.
In fact you were very smartly attired
as though you were doing quite nicely,
good circle of friends, etc.

And then we were walking
past some polished machinery, light blue,
It produced a nightmarish contrast
with the red soil of the construction site,

thus your scream of distress
—irrational, intense