The Four Seasons

Henry Carlile
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In the shape of a submarine
frost lengthens on a window.
Outside, winter sparrows perch
in rhinoceros-colored trees.
Mare’s tails chase whitely
past brick chimneys.
I have seen those lights before,
small rectangular eyes
of far buildings, one church
steeple darkening the blue sky.

It looks like a stopped gray heart
if hearts sport such delicate scallops
and trees wear hearts on their sleeves.
Now the first wasp of spring emerges,
its wings a transparency of fish scales,
old isinglass or vein-fretted windows—
wings of the first untranscendent angel
sentenced to death by the god frost.
How can some later spring reclaim this
paper city or repair its walls damaged
in the long drop from the one hundred
and twentieth odd year of a tree?
The sky wears that color through which you expect a tornado’s black drill. Only cicadas try the air, a scratching that cannon could not silence. Beyond the barn with three siloes and the wind pump stopped like a tin daisy, carp lip the surface of reflected sky, the promised violence.

I always imagined that place as an orchard on a mountaintop, its summer Delicious freckling to a sunset by Seurat. But the last time it was fall, the sere grass bent one way toward an open gate, as though a great wind had swept down stones of the garden walls. Two posts bent where the orchard had been, their purpose obscure. They stood, I think, where flowers had rivaled deepest in their colors and scents.