Allegory: Life and War and Death
November 5, 2023

Thursday, I left work to feed my parking meter
buy a muffin from the Dominion Cafe.
Heading down Baker Street, I noticed what appeared to be
a little family;
a mom, a dad
two little girls
maybe ages 3 and 5
waiting for the light.

I waited at the corner.
Waited for my light to change,
then grew nearer to them with each step.
The older little girl took
a green marble
out of her coat pocket.
It slipped
out of her hands onto the pavement.
It began to roll away from her.
She stepped out,
following it.

I tried to will my feet to go faster,
but their beat kept time with the slow rolling of the marble;
round and round and round.

I could not make it in time,
could not force my throat to call out,
could not lift my concrete boots to rush.

Under the focus of the little girl,
the marble took one last roll of destiny
and slowly fell
through the storm drain grate in the road.

My breath caught,
my boots stopped walking.
It was over.

She squatted down beside the grate to check it out.
The little girl started to cry,
and weep,
and then wail,
and then scream;
louder and louder
piercing through any anonymity we practice
on public streets.

Standing beside the family on the corner now,
I could hear them speaking French,
a rare sound here.

I waited for the light to change.
Wished for the light to change
to set me free of this tortured
screaming,
and despair
at my side.
It was contagious
and I expected everyone to throw their heads back
in abandon
in the rain
screaming at the injustice of it all.

I must have rushed in
to Gaia Rising too quickly
with the wind at my back
because everyone looked up from their browsing.

The shop keeper asked
*Can I help you with something?*
I said breathlessly,
*Yes, I need a little round green rock right away*.
She motioned to me a bin full of jade gem stones,
*Maybe one of these could work?*
Oddly, she seemed unbothered
nor surprised about someone
having a jade emergency.

The perfect one sat on top of the collection.
I paid her two dollars and sixty-five cents
and went back out to the street.

It was loudly pouring rain.
The family wasn’t on the corner anymore,
nor were they down the street.

An hour later, I picked up my kids and
told them about the little girl and her green marble.
Aloud it was a bad story.
Clearly unsatisfied with the ending,
they asked,
*Well what are you going to do now?*
Confidently I said,
*Well, I’m going to keep the rock in my pocket.
When we run into the family in the future
we can give it to them*.

Brows showed doubts.
*But how are you going to find them?*
I smiled, *You always run into the people you are looking for in this town
so I’m sure they will show up.*
They still frowned,
silent in thought.
Then asked,
*What are you going to tell her when you give her the green rock?*

Ah, they finally got me.
I hadn’t thought that far yet,
still stuck in the moment
of the marble
slowly
circling the storm drain.
I paused then said,
*Kneeling down I will tell her that the storm drain flows out into the lake,
that her marble already rests with other shiny rocks
looking up at the sky
with birds
with clouds.*

*not spending the night in a sewer
with rats and poop.

Holding out my hand
with the green rock in it
I will whisper, this rock has a message for you:****All-Is-Not-Lost****,
then I will give it to her and leave.*

The kids looked happy
this ending to the story was good.
They said*,
That sounds like a good plan,
but leave out the rats and poop part.*

But that’s what sewers have.
The little green rock
protected in my pocket,
keeping it safe for the little girl.
But as the days go by
I begin to suspect
the family was not from here
but rather from Away,
I wonder who
the message of the rock is really for.
All is not lost.