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Frozen in Babylon

A matrix of massive
stone blocks
creeps around the citizens;
laws chiseled
in deep relief
on these great walls
lean asunder—no exit,
no room
for living

Monsters, too,
face down the people
and force them into line;
a clawed beast here,
one with scales and long neck,
and the unicorn waiting
to impale a virgin before
she escapes
the labyrinth of laws

Proud tower returns to sand;
proud sand
scrubs clean the walls,
the mind,
the history

Upon the High Castle

Go down the mesa
with beans
and corn in your basket;
it's cooler here in the cliff
face pueblo
as the updraft carries
sun's heat back to the sky

In the kiva we all
look to the sipapu,
wondering if we are to return
home, or beg
for rain;

No begging
has made rain fall in seventeen years;
the tribes that came back
to the canyon painted their
mascots on the wall:
parrot, horned toad,
and cougar—
as they cried
of hunger and thirst

This floating world,
between heaven
and earth, descends
now, dragged down
by empty bellies,
the heaviest weight
of all

No Guiding Light

Grinding the best essence
of a nation
through a fistful of whining
words—

such rocks
slide down a mountain
gathering speed; no arms
can stop them—
they must hit
bottom to stop

These lies
remain in pieces
as the dust settles
like fog on every
morning when the red
gates of heaven
roll open

On the roadside:
a cup, a can,
a broken urn, each
filled with bubbled
poison and preserved
across time

The White Grave

Needle teeth of crystal
snow mark flesh forever;
no mind can thaw
in a white grave
so far from any man's
sacred home

Glowing pyramids, a wish
for wealth
and power as in some
world passed by,
can't warm this frozen air
with the hot breath of lies
alone

Schools of Drift

A guru of elephant
lore runs his
own school into the ground;
radiating myth,
he now seeks profit
and angers the gods

If not recorded on scrolls
or clay, wisdom
evaporates, and sometimes
the student benefits
from the pause

One flower can push
aside a stone; one stone
can push aside a river;
one river can push
aside a city
when it dries or just outrages
from its banks