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ELISE PARTRIDGE

CHEMO SIDE EFFECTS: MEMORY

Where is the word I want?
Groping
in the thicket,
about to pinch the
dangling
berry, my fingerpads
close on
air.
I can hear it
scrabbling like a squirrel
on the oak’s far side.
Word, please send over this black stretch of ocean
your singular flare,
blaze
your topaz in the mind’s blank.
I could always pull the gift
from the lucky-dip barrel,
scoop the right jewel
from my dragon’s trove….
Now I flail,
the wrong item creaks up
on the mental dumbwaiter.
No use —
it’s turning
out of sight,
a bicycle down a
Venetian alley —
I clatter after, only to find
gondolas bobbing in sunny silence,
a pigeon mumbling something
I just can’t catch.