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A Sculptor to the Sculpted

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Maggie Kennedy

A Sculptor to the Sculpted
Giacometti to his Walking Man

You have to be cut down a peg,
whittled by circumstance,
a shaving here, a slice there

until the slights, jeers, fumbles,
even my duplicity,
this paring of your heart

a bargained gale, more promise
than disillusion; you must want
to go home then realize

this is your home now; I must cut
from you the girth of all you expected
was yours unconditionally until

you are pin-thin, slight enough
to settle with the other scrapes,
elbow to elbow, yet never quite touch

until you are the rhythm of the dim
train churning to and from the desk
where you are a bent head

among countless bent heads until I tug
your chin up to witness the chant
of geese echoing down the skyscrapers

because you must be a fabricator,
a prevaricator to draw a certain splendor
from the steam rising off the sewer ducts,

to keep walking despite your lodged feet;
I must take you to the edge of tears by
the unexpected kindness of pigeons;

you will not know then but this is what
saves you, gives you audacity, impudence
to love another stick figure for

how she sees you seeing her and for
a time this is all there will be,
astonishment at your luck,

how your outlines fit together as if
carved for each other; you must mistake
this charity for the rest of your life

until I release you to the fire, sparks
catching, for you cannot escape
the times you live in,

smoke will creep through windows,
infiltrate sheets; you will cough over
convictions, choke on burning hypocrisy,

compliment the fire one ideal at a time
until you are baseless, brittle;
you will see those you love dragged,

go wild and embrace the flames until
you are alone inside your frame,
bronzed and scabbed but underneath

you are soft as clay and you can't stop
saying sorry, your shadow crossing
another's as you cross the square

until you notice the play of light between
shadows and pigeons daring for a crumb
and you yourself look up.