

At the Artbreak Hotel

She and her guitar might be just the other side of the door—so close
I can hear the fingers of her left hand on the strings. She sings,

teases out a song by a poet who died a week ago. Tonight,
it could soothe, but it breaks. She doesn't know it.

To my right, out the window amid the night, the voices of young men joust.
Cars purr and sigh. She gets her footing. The melody is true.

Her voice lifts. I begin to sing along. Who hasn't heard this song,
so often that its maker requested we all stop singing it?

At least for a while? But he's dead now. The Artbreak Hotel
is settling, limb by limb, into sleep. So much sound

to my left, to my right. Am I a wall, a veil?
Do you? she plaints. And suddenly I wonder what I do: a tourist

in these lives, a gee-whiz through it,
in this busted china a heap of excelsior.

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