

The Hollow Umbrella Tube Delivers a Shot of Poison

Tonight, there are a lot of fancy people in the streets.
Bond watches them from a café table,
how they are possessed

of their own gesture, *une chose déplacée*. They suggest escape,
each a nerve's jerk in the larger State—
how Queen or the greater good

could demand any of them, at any moment, and one
should look one's best when the call
comes. Then the doubt,

like the sound a hand makes as it flexes in leather gloves.
Bond thinks, *How can I save a thing*
I do not wish to understand?

It pleases me to be bigger than the things I protect.
What do they call themselves...souls?
He thinks of the depression

at the meeting of a woman's collar, a finger placed against it,
the machine above that finger a question
of intention—a god deciding.

As he rises, moves among them, their motion a nuisance
against the wool of his Burberry coat,
Bond feels it as a prick

to the small of his back, the gentleman in black passing him
whistling, drop of liquid bright at the umbrella's tip.
The initial symptoms after exposure:

runny nose, tightness in the chest, *mal fichu*. An antidote
in a case sewed into the lining of a suit jacket
hangs in his hotel closet.

All that is left to him in this moment is a gesture—
the shift of his feet toward that destination,
a singular pivot. *Breathe. Breathe.*