

Emergent Poet

Yvonne Murphy

The Gates

Central Park, Valentine's Day

Dusk: we enter from Harlem, the *AltaGracia* Deli a beacon near 116th and Fifth. Airplanes tear scraps of heaven from clouds—blue chalk, aquamarine, lighter blue. Red and yellow security lights flash up and down the hill. Later, we'll feed each other slippery mussels fresh from the market. We stroll with other couples framed in saffron; holding your hand, dark silhouettes of trees emerge against an almost night sky. So cold, we move from Meer to North Meadow, the wind picks up and The Gates are nightshirts saturated with love, Buddhist robes, blooms on the line, live haiku by the thousands: lucky poems incorporated into the landscape, this moment.

Tall buildings across the meadow sport orange skirts, light arrives in antique lamp posts, illuminating these flags while a helicopter swoons. Taking in everything at once, for once, in the path of this silver-white moon. Skirts and shower curtains, trash bags, laundry, hot coals from ancient fires, flags sent as hopeful messages. The Gates look forward and wave back—quiet looms as red hands flash danger in the crosswalks, the way things settle in and go unnoticed. Refracted saffron permeates evening over the ice of the Meer like a giant school of overfed Koi swimming through February's snow and mud, the Fauve orange from paintings I saw so long ago—at the Metropolitan, in pictures of distant villages with calm water and empty boats.

Look how far they've come to greet us, to say: *you are part of the landscape, too.*