Swing Your Partner

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Like a dance hall, this courtyard
smells of stale beer and sausage.
Dead leaves pick up their skirts
docey-doe just so high
until they drop, exhausted
to the pavement
then allemande into gutters
scuttering all the way.
The sun twirls a dingy crinoline,
its ragged hem
sticks to my neck.
Air tastes like cheap cigars
in noisy congratulations wrappers.

Time is an orchestra
on a ten minute break.
I hold my breath for the pay phone to ring,
my doctor calling back with numbers.
Sitting forward on the bench
I tuck in my shirt
run shaky fingers through my hair
primp for the moment
his words will slip their arms behind my back
join hands with mine
and take me for a spin.
The silence pleads for music,
a polka, schottische, square dance.

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