

## At Sundown, A New Day Begins

A nomadic artist and her companions have set up camp for the night. They rest at a mausoleum thousands of years old, but forgotten. For those living nearby who drive past its crumbling stones the color of sand, it has become invisible. Once monumental, the mausoleum's corinthian columns are now bruised, its acanthus leaves wilted despite centuries of rain.

They have hired an assessor. Perhaps she can tell them if the paintings in their possession are worthy of a collection, or must be relegated to the archive. For decades their status has been uncertain. And so they hang here at night, and will be removed and covered at daybreak, as not to expose their surfaces to the bleaching rays of the sun. Seeing the display, one recalls the earliest salons, artworks competing for attention and a position in history.

A guard, one of their ranks, passes the evening sketching the dark landscape, as the soft curves and faint shadows of dawn gave way to the hard edges of the waking world. But mostly he draws the patterns in his own mind, memories of thousands of nights like this one. He rarely looks up, relying instead on the subtlest sound to alert him of approaching danger. Mostly he hears the gentle staccato of bird song, and the low whistle of the wind.

And while the Romans have been gone from this land for centuries, they live on inside many of the paintings and sculptures. Their artists's visual and technical discoveries of centuries ago, are remembered even while many of their names have been lost. In this way, each painting is a window into history, but also an argument for remembering the past in the present.

- Joseph Del Pesco

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