

John FitzGerald

**THE TIME
BEING**



Gallery Books

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T H E T I M E B E I N G

Sisters

Her elopement lasted only seven days
and, on return, she was amazed
nobody would mention it;
it was as though they too had been illicit

in their ways, agreeing not to relate
how someone had turned in the gate,
strolled up the avenue, wouldn't call
or knock but came straight through the hall

singing and dancing and being
open in ways they had never seen,
making his bed among them too —
each one succumbing to his clever lures,

until they realized he couldn't stay: this artful lover
would never match their love for one another.

Light Itinerary

Only the backside bulb of the walking man
is flashing

as though his phone's on silent
in his back pocket

ringing, or he's left the flashlight app set
to strobe.

Slightly stooped, one arm extended,
he seems

a lone backpacker, tramping city crossings,
parks,

like the other trolley-hauling homeless
who are everywhere here,

their eyes avoiding
yours avoiding theirs —

as if to say:
Go, don't go, go, don't go, go.

1 WTC

A schoolyard in Tribeca, mid-morning,
mid-winter, shrill cries swarming like gulls
around a tall figure assenting with a smile
to take each rubber ball and punch it
with the top of a piston fist,
high up into the air, up
where the children's faces follow their eyes rising
beyond fist, beyond head, beyond steel school roof
to each ball at its dependable point of fall,
and indifferent to the continued upward going
of this glimmering glass backdrop to it all,
this one thing that one day will become for them
everything that is impossible and beyond reasonable reach,
like the first unexpected sight of the rest of their lives.

While Walking in the Armstrong Woods

Mischief in the branches high above —
no, worse than mischief: the fell scream
of a marauder, a victim's strangled cries
in a life and death struggle we both
stop to imagine from below. I take in
your singlet-flattened chest, tanned
neck, golden hair, the earnest angle
of your head, and a small grey chick's
feather floating past to land unseen
on your shoulder. I wait for you to act —
shake, itch, brush off the burden,
until I realize this, after all, after all the waiting,
is the real world, the here and now,
the unexceptional quiddling it.