

ROSALYNDE VAS DIAS

---

*Silent Defense*

Rick, the beetle was dead.

Its legs were folded across its abdomen in a posture of containment and decay was absent—its shell still coppery and lustrous.

Remember when I told you I'd been arrested for vandalism?—I'd just wanted to taste one of the tiles on a particular cobalt pillar, an unpremeditated act. I had a pocket knife with me by coincidence.

Rick, taste is important because speech is impossible.

The beetle's left elystron snapped off cleanly and fit the tip of my tongue like the husk of a popcorn kernel. Still, the throat did not open. Maybe I was not surprised, though disappointed. I thought:

*Well, a prose line is so useful when you can't stop talking,*

but a significant part of my experience was *silence lapsed into*

as during an argument turning violent when at last there is no

recourse. I did not manage to bring the blue tile to my mouth;

a guard intervened. Rick, the beetle during its pupae stage is  
*seemingly inert* though this is a stage of enormous physiological change.

The throat is like a well—imagine holding a beautiful object in a  
closed well. But what is the point—no light refracting through its  
crystalline arrangement? It is a lump, black or gray or nothing.

Maybe you need to climb out. Carry it in your mouth, leave your  
hands free for grasping.