Poem

In the dinosaur exhibit

A tooth that's not a tooth
a mottled clump of bone
a pelvis chipped and warped
a joint that wouldn't join, surely —
the model beside the fossil shows
the articulated ridge, the rounded
socket where the ball
of the femur's meant to fit
a shape that in the real thing
is obscure, like a replica made
of unfired clay that's been pressed
by a palm into dirt.
He carried them in him
these twisted bones, to the edge
of the bog where he laid
down his flattened jaw.
This is what the body retains
pinned up on display
and neatly labelled: combat
fall, and daily wear
fractured elbow, broken
patella, slightly comminuted
meaning crushed. Something to show
at least, but none of this
this standing — *being* here
this stillness before
the once-bones in the museum
friends already finished
the exhibit, this marking
what the markers mark most —
the absence around them
this being that absence.

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