

The Dream Palace

In November, the rain came down in sheets of lavender gray. I was twenty-two years old and lonely. In those days, I was living at the top of Fort George Hill, on the borderline between boroughs. I breathed in ballpoint and linen; clutched my heart in my fist, guarding it from dissonance and displeasure. My birthday cake, still fresh in my mind, had lost its sweetness long ago; its scent in my memory was tinged with the bitter reminiscence of blown out candles. The time for celebration had passed.

The boy, electric, came in rather amicably. Divine in demeanor, he cosseted my breath with a string of pretty words. Every moment that passed between us was one of a kind. I dissected those moments, cherished them, outlined them in winsome stories. The seconds segmented, the stars split; there was some air of great tragedy to us, but I ignored the sentiment and progressed as if we would outlast the gods themselves. His stern eyes reflected each strand of light with brilliance. His high voltage hedonism undeniable.

How I was filled longing for that smile, or a glance thrown in my direction, in a room lush with the spell of Catholic architectural grace. How I nursed wine and wonder while pining in Brooklyn—the natural bookend for the dream palace he built deep in my heart. How a midnight rule took the place of conversation and imagination, phantom hands and lips during the witching hour. How God became a stone in the spoke of a wheel that spun wildly out of control. How my mind became a monument to our dark magnetism, to the poetics of our relation.

Time; a charged divide between us. Whole years we did not know each other. And whole years to come in which we will not know each other.

And yet, how I arranged the petals of our florid fantasy just so, how I pulled a narrative from a single spark on a bridge, fighting against the grain of evangelical consternation. How I held the mirror of him up to the light, covering over the cracks to construct a mythology for the new world.

Of course, there are things he tells me himself. Things I do not have to piece together much later. Rudimentary details. He comes from the Midwest. He talks about his parents with obvious pride, talks about his siblings as if they can change the world.

But we also speak of depression, of the office we will *not* share together, of privilege and prestige and perfectionism. We speak about standards and saviors and sovereignty.

He knows me well. Or well enough, anyways. That's what I'd like to think. It doesn't take too much effort to understand me, or maybe it does, but whatever the case, I think he's got a handle on who I am. I think he finds me endearing in a rather eccentric way. I'm fresh fruit waiting to be picked.

When I think of him, I think of a sea green elevator, of Moscato by moonlight, of the chordal veil spiraling into ivy and illusion. I think of a film of tears spilt on the black and white tile of the bath, of Florence Welch's lilting Joan of Arc tune going up in fire. I think of language and identity, of

snowy serenity. A sinister rose hums blood, the edges fuzzing with dire need. I think of risk and reward all wrapped into one cherry bomb of luxe.

We were once miraculous; New York's finest. Plucked from millions to become a pair. We were a kingdom unto ourselves; our reign the envy of many. So young, so bright, so strong. Butterflies with mending wings, catching the breeze, blossoming out of shame and fragility, into glory.