

Seurat

Exit Twenty

There's a stretch of highway where it all falls into place.

Just the right time, just
the right phase of the setting sun.

There's a stretch of highway where the mountains are purple
mounds of mist that mimic lilac clouds,
where the forests and cliffs that enclosed me since birth
are replaced by open sky.

There's a stretch of highway where old wood houses
stand guard for meadow filled valleys and mood lit clouds,
where I look out through my windshield and into
hills and homes and air in between,
sweeter and stiller than the kind in my lungs.

There's a stretch of highway where it all falls into place.

Colors on a pallet I would ignore for their brighter sisters
steal my breath off exit twenty.

There's a stretch of highway where I kneel in supplication,
where the cliffs and trees that stand guard for me
are guarded themselves by the mountains and sky,
two ever-kissing godly beings.

There's a stretch of highway where my walls don't hold me,
where we hold each other in a similar embrace,
trees lining my road in a home with no roof,
and while at night the stars hold hands like children,
I feel younger still, protected by the shapes they make.

There's a stretch of highway where it all falls into place.

Trapped in steel, I offer my essence up to
the knowledge that altar lights are dancing around just for me.

There's a stretch of highway I've driven up and down so often
that these roads feel more like veins,
and I feel bloody with newborn joy
as I travel up the pathways to my heart.

There is a stretch of highway where it all falls into place.

With cascading waterfalls and ice covered cliffs,
with moss grown roots, and pastel fields
that only live off exit twenty.

Angel

Angel,
I don't think this is suitable for your eyes, for
sweet smiling cheeks,
unmarred by cold or hunger.

Angel,
let the men talk it over;
such talk is not for ones of
holy righteousness.

Cherub girl, newborn pure-
Keep her away!
Keep her that way!
She's never seen blood shed,
never felt tears.

As though birth is clean and devoid of suffering.
As though death is dirty and devoid of peace.

Naive angel girl,
spent so long in the clouds
that air fills her porcelain skull.

As though that air did not rush out of screaming lungs.

Call me angel, call me sweet.

As though the holy are the ones who pray.
As though the weak and wicked have never knelt,
sunk down after a hit to the back of the knees.

As though I do not hear the flailing, screaming, torture of man.
As though my mortal company does not consist of
pleading children for someone, anyone, please, help me,
help, me please, help oh god please, anyone-

Rosy cheeks, so seaglass smooth.

As though the stones of the shore were never beaten
by the closed fist of the waves
without end, until
they learned to mimic the
feel of the water, lying still to take the blows
and lessen their sting.

Until the fight was punched out of an innocent soldier
who never wished for war, who only wished for a
righteous and holy fight, who never imagined
senseless, endless violence such as this.

You call me angel.

How dare you claim me, with
your hands held behind your back,
the washed clean hands of a sinner;
hands which were pre-prepared for our meeting.

Precious little darling,
my cherub girl, newborn pure.

Do not claim me, with pretty words and lilting tones
of an ancient language, of a thousand voices.

I do not belong to you,

but to the ones who do not know the words,
and still scream their meaning in tones that shatter
your falsely colored glass.

Call me angel.

As though I would ever bless your unbroken soul.

Call me angel.

As though I do not know
you have never cried out to me
Angel!

My husband John

on nights i shut the doors of my eyelids against
the cold wind tears that knock,
I can feel you behind me

I can feel your arms around me
in the kind of hug that hides both our faces

i can't remember our wedding day
did You cry when you saw me, bride in white?
did We pledge to love, regardless of loss, of pain
in sickness and in health?
the ivy knowledge of our past has covered the gravestones that mark my memories
i can no longer read the dates.

it doesn't matter where We met, or how We loved
it's the air i'm breathing- old and stale and dim now
ambient lighting we fell asleep in as children, chasing away the fear of the dark.

tonight my eyes hurt from crying, so I conjure the remains of a battle.
i can hear echos of screaming until our voices speared our throats
with words that i can't tell if We meant, that were pulled from the deep
because it's late, and i've been fired up and
torn down too many times.

i can't hear those words, only shiver as their ghosts pass through me
wincing when they graze a bruise from their punches
but it's over now, and Your arms hold my dislocated mind together
arms i can count on to squeeze me safe, but never strangle

my husband John.

He fills the emptiness, the silence that sticks
to the inside of My ears the way cotton candy does a child's shirt.
He's there, there's no other explanation
for the feeling that I was betrayed by someone i loved, i trusted.
for my nightly grieving over the death of our love, of our happiness together

i don't wish for unhappiness, but it's here anyways
i don't know where it came from, so I point at him.

i want someone else to be to blame, someone to point to with an accusatory finger
You, this is your fault
i'm not happy and it's Your fault
You did this to Me
like people blame the weather for their rainy days, I blame John.

ican'tiwonticantiwon'tacceptthat
itsMethatthesourceofmypainisMethatimresponsibleforMymiseryidontbelieveititsnottrue
its nottrueyoure lyingyoure all liarsits notMe it can't
be it can't be
it's

My husband John.

He won't leave
not when i yell
not when i cry
not when i to throw words and dishes and pain
ot when I plunge my fist into my chest and rip out my heart
still bleeding
still pumping
not even when You see the cavern where My life source, love source, once was

whywontyouleavemealoneyoustupidfuckeryoudidthisomeihateyou

You won't recoil in disgust, won't flinch
ot when i throw it down forcefully into your hands
still pulsing
still warm
still wet
still living

not even when I scream at you for stealing it

My husband John.

He'll cradle my heart, my source of sadness like He would our child
when it gets too heavy for Me to hold
so, so heavy, I bow down
keel over, kneel over like a tree branch too laden with snow
and I can throw it at him without care because I know He will catch, won't drop it,
will bounce and soothe the bloody broken mess in his arms
until i'm ready to have it back

and i want him, I need him,
to hold my pain, to give it a name and a reason
i want to grip that reason like a heartstring and pull
wrenching agony from Him until He clutches His chest and falls over in pain too
'till He feels like I do,
and now we're equal, like spouses should be, equally hurt and equally real

but he isn't

my husband john

The Hunter

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*Can you see the cup? There are four stars,
Like here,*

He touches the sundrops on my shoulder,

here, and here and here.

backs against the grass, every light turned out.

*Follow the handle, solnishka-
can you see the handle?*

Papa, where's the one I like? The man who fights?

He's hiding, he sleeps in the summer

Why?

*Because, that's what he does
He'll be back in the wintertime*

He was the first thing I looked for in the frigid sky.
Nose against the backseat window,
exhales leaving twin ovals on the glass.

He was the last thing I looked for in that floating ink sea.
Lifting weighted eyes against your shoulder after late night driving
just to check he was still there

The hunter,
spread out across the winter sky,
reclining on supernova pillows.

Standing guard at the gates of the atmosphere,
watching, daring someone
to challenge his club, to knock at the doors of my dreams.

He rises slowly, dancing each night with the moon
as I sink harmoniously
into unconsciousness.

In the summer his belt appears on my forearm, down the left side of my face.

*Hold onto this, child
I will be back for it
When the nights are long
And days leave your bones chilled.*

A promise to return, to retrieve,
so still he shields me
even while protecting someone else,
some other little girl whose little nose needs guarding from red cold winds.

I knew he's there for me.
His belt stretches across my forearm and down the left side of my face
in tears that dripped off the cheek of the Sun.

*Did you know, solnishka,
his belt is on your face?*

Yes, Papa, and on my arm too- look!

*That's very a special belt,
for a special little girl*

Солнышка, *solnishka*, sunshine.
Burning through my skin
in celestial patterns you studied in years past,
in stories you traced with fingers and words while
my eyes followed along.

But now I'm older, and
not солнышка, *solnishka*, sunshine
Now my tears are earthly,
not golden from heaven
but ocean descendant.

*Sometimes, the stars don't align
It happens*

And I know it's just a saying,
born from long ago
that you say to me, to
appease the tides, ease the storms
that flood the left side of my face.

It wasn't meant to be

Such foolish old men!
Don't take their words as truth!

Didn't they know
that the stars are simply aligning somewhere else?

Didn't they know
that if there are no shapes in your part of the sky,
they will appear with a change in the seasons?

Didn't they understand that in this weather, you won't find the heroes you look for?
I will look towards the horizon, and wait for him to rise.

The hunter,
spread out across the winter sky,
reclining on supernova pillows.

*Many thanks, child
For keeping it safe.*

And while I wait for the wind to change
and the earth to tilt just so,

I trust it did the same for you.

I will find solace in the belt on my forearm, down the left side of my face.

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Flower Thief

It's a crime to steal a flower,
frolicking along a sun-dappled path.
Look left, look right- then run!

Wild twisted tumbles triumph
over the wind and rain, yet still stand quiet.
It's a crime to steal a flower.

Carefully laid down in soft beds by gentle hands,
guarding the pile of bricks behind them.
Look left, look right-- then run!

All are targets, none are safe
from our creeping scanning stare, our greedy fingers.
It's a crime to steal a flower

Give me your life so I might gather
what once was mine in the cup of my hands
Look left, look right-- then run!

We crush a life to make a memory
Steal a soul to make another young
It's a crime to steal a flower;
Look left, look right- then run!