

In The Land of Sorrow

I've got Sorrow on my mind. I can't escape her. Her memory haunts me as surely as a phantom in a Poe novel, filling the shadowy corners of each thought, rearranging the furniture in my inner house until I stumble and fall into darkness.

My reflection judges me as I gaze into the night beyond the rain streaked glass to the fractured lights of the city below. The chaos of the storm is as silent to me as the mass of humanity seething like ants along Manhattan's sodden streets. Our apartment, *my* apartment, sits high above such cacophony, and even though all such towers of this great city do sway in the fierce winds I no longer notice.

Raising my eyes towards the Hudson my breath catches as an amorphous shape swirls out of the darkness, twisting and swirling as it rushes towards my window. It is Sorrow coming for me! My involuntary step back causes me to knock my wine glass from the table, spilling its deep red contents across the Persian rug like an accusation. Tears spring to my eyes as I jerk them back to the window, both hoping and dreading what I will see on the other side. It is my own ghostly face that stares at me hollow-eyed, rivulets of rain mimicking its tears.

Only as I press my palms against the cold glass do I detect the tremor of the wind and rain passing into my body. Behind the darkness of closed eyes her face comes to me, not ghostly from the

storm, but softly as it did so many times in those moments of tender loving. I throw myself into that pool of memory, grasping desperately to hold onto the moment.

“Jeanine, you are beautiful.” She says in the faintest of whispers. She thinks I’m asleep already, happily exhausted and snuggled in her soft arms. I don’t want to sleep. I want to stay here, in this moment, forever. I feel the touch of her lips on my forehead, a butterfly landing for a second before soaring away. I drink the smell of her, sweet and tangy and somehow like cloves. One long nail draws a line down my face, tenderly tracing along my jaw.

It more than I can bear and my arms wrap around her and pull her sweet lips to mine.

Something thunks against the window and my memory is cruelly cut off. Debris is swirling in the wind as the storm builds. I feel my own heartbeat in my throat. I feel the empty place in my chest where my heart *should* be, once *was*.

I know the memories that are rushing at me now and I have no where to run. Sinking to the wet rug I plunge my face into my hands but still, they arrive like hungry lions sensing an easy meal.

“Tell me what’s wrong! How can I help if you won’t tell me what’s wrong?” I followed Sorrow from room to room, unwilling to let her avoid this conversation, relentless in my pursuit. She refused to answer. Her silence hitting me like stones. Into the kitchen. Getting a glass of water and setting it down on the counter, still full. Into the bedroom. The bed cold and unmade. Pulling her travel bag from the closet, then leaving it on the floor. Into the living room. Dead and empty of sound. Sorrow sits on the red sofa, her back stiff and straight, her black hair pulled into a bun so severe her cheekbones jutted in harsh relief. I move to sit beside her, but she leaps away - the antelope evading the cheetah.

“Sorrow! Sorrow! “ my voice falls like stones in a well as she runs into the bedroom and I hear the lock click.

I knew, of course, exactly what was wrong. It was my own weakness and foolishness and hubris that led me into another’s bed. I still could not admit it, could not hear my own voice condemn me. But, I knew. And Sorrow knew. I had not forgotten how fragile she was. I had not forgotten how tentative her hold on reality was. I had just put it out of my mind for that hour.

I knock on the bedroom door not really expecting an answer. After a while I knock again, and again, and again.

The wind has reached a wild pitch and I actually hear it through the weight of these dreaded memories just the glass above me shatters, brilliant jagged bits falling on my head and legs, my own blood joining that stain on the carpet. A crane has broken loose, crashing into my invulnerable tower.

Looking at my bloody leg I pull loose the shard and toss it aside. My vision blurs and I see Sorrow in a similar pool of red, a sharp knife in her limp hand

I’ve got Sorrow on my mind. Dismissing the sharp pain I pull myself up and face the empty window frame. It’s no small effort to push against the wind and rain, but I manage it. I see her now, swirling toward me.

“I’m sorry”

The wind grabs my words and scatters them as I pull Sorrow into my arms.