

I fell in love with the baker's son

Maybe it's the way he slowly,
carefully,
pushes his solid, boxer's fists into the cool,
firm dough
with restrained force.
As though his floured hands were
wantonly kneading the stress of the day
from his lover's delicate body.

Maybe it's the way he knows exact measurements:
3 eggs, 1/4 cup of almond paste,
a pinch of star anise.
Precisely how many kisses on the
thin, perfumed skin of
a woman's neck,
her collarbone.
How much pressure on the cartilage of
her right ear.
Or just how long to hold back
before leaning in
to meet the parched lips
thirsting for him - *only him* -
before he covers her mouth
with his own.

Maybe it's the way he dips his spoon
into the thick batter,
eyes locked in discernment,
licking his lips,
recognizing the taste.
The marriage of perfect ingredients.
The rich, creamy saltiness
of Napoleon custard,
of glistening skin.

Maybe it's the way he intently,
meticulously
braids the buttery Danish pastries.
As though he is lacing their fingers together
for all eternity,
and he wants to get it just right.
Or the way he lovingly brushes on the egg wash.
As though he is consecrating the bread of her body,
anointing her in oil and yolk and
crystallized sugar
and trust.

Maybe it's the way he lazily,
gingerly
trails his fingers,
over the flaky crust,
over knees and elbows and breasts.
His fingertips
on the pulse of midnight.
His fingertips
on shoulder blade and spine
and the sfogliatelle curve of tailbone.
As though she were made of light and air and
lemon-zested phyllo.
His touch awakening her.
He lays her gently down on the waxed parchment,
as though she were a fragile cannoli shell,
as if he does not want to leave fingerprints
on the skin of marzipan.

Maybe it's the dry heat from the ovens,
or the moist heat of their hungry bodies.
Or the scent of the vanilla,
the cinnamon,
the cocoa powder.
The scent of her bare skin,
bathed in jasmine,
drizzled with molasses
and desire.

Maybe it's the way he fills the pastry cups,
as though he were filling her emptiness.

Maybe it's the glint in his eyes,
as he looks up,
knowing
the *familiar*,
starved
look in my eyes.
Holding my gaze.
Or his friendly, open smile showing his intense love
for this thing that he has created.

Maybe it's the way he silently rolls out the fondant.
As though he is
reluctantly
unfolding a blanket
to cover her sleeping body.

2 Samuel 23:4: He is like the light of morning at sunrise, on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after the rain that brings forth the grass from the earth.¹

I love you, Rain

Where do butterflies go when it rains?
Do they hang upside down from the branches of sycamore maples eating helicopter seeds?
Or are they defiant? Chasing rainbows?
Flying through ionized tornado eyes determined to find that last stretch of cloudless sky?

The rain slowly washes away the smiling sun.
The sky looks like it was painted with brushes dipped in crushed pearls and moondust.
Storm clouds march across the sky like an army of pill bugs,
like Sparta marching on Troy, and I can't help but wonder –
was Helen really worth all that?

Is love? Am I?

I breathe him in with the dense air,
heavy with the weight of sad fog and song lyrics.
Somewhere behind me Andrew's melancholy voice sings:
"but I'm so tired of days that feel like the night."^{#2}

So I count ripples in puddles like a child skipping rocks.
I count dreams strung together like paper chains.
I count California poppies. I make soft orange wishes.
I tell secrets to paper moons.
I was eleven the first time.
Dancing in the rain, jumping in puddles, and there he was,
a falling star,
a memory in two-toned jeans,
shirtless and stretching his arms towards heaven.
I fell the first time I ever saw him, before I even knew his name.
And sometimes I remember . . .

The wind picks up. Trees bend at the waist, bowing their leafy green heads,
curtseying like lovers about to begin a Devonshire Minuet.

I watch the liturgy of thunder and lightning and wind that precedes a storm
the way goosebumps and knots and forgetting to breathe precede falling in love.

Ordinary people don't realize how much like falling in love the coming of a storm is.
But romantics and poets - and even lunatics maybe –
they know the smell of rain carried on the vapor breath of the wind and the way lightning differs among cities.
White New York lightning licks the tops of skyscrapers.
The almost yellow Santa Cruz lightning scorches mountain tops.
Florida lightning paints the Daytona Beach skyline the colors of titanium quartz.
They know love is just another ravaging monsoon.
And it is always this way.

¹ * From the Bible.

² # From "Me and the Moon" written by Andrew McMahon and performed by the band Something Corporate.

The soul remembers
the melodic tink,

tink,

tink,

of rain on glass,
a finger gently tapping a shoulder,
knuckles accidentally brushing
a hand
resting on an arm, guiding by the elbow,
lips shyly grazing a cheek,
a greedy mouth wishing for more.
I wish he would have kissed me that night.
I still want him to kiss me.
The moon sighs, she too is falling.
She blinks away the clouds like a book brushing the dust from its jacket.

Heartbeats like thunder shake my house and I'm not eleven anymore.

Today it's the man with the serious face and sleepy brown eyes.
He smells like soap and hair gel and there is never enough time.
He is the thread of a thought
spun in rosegold,
snagging the delicate blue fabric of the China silk sky, and I -
I see the echo of his lost smile in my eyes.
I draw maps of his face, and I -
I finger-paint his name in fogged windows.
It is love,
as still as purple climbing vines,
clematis seeking the sun,

without movement,

or breath,

or heartbeat.

I'm caught – hostage to the moment of eerie calm just before the storm hits and I fall.
And I don't know if the sound I hear is the hum of the a/c vent or my own small voice.
And the way you're reading this - - it isn't the way it sounds in my head.
And the words that come - - they're a whisper, a prayer:

I love you, Rain. I love you, stars.
I love you, moon in Virgo.
I love you, neon signs and downed power lines.
I love you, Cassiopeia. I love you, Orion and Canis Major.
I love you, waterlogged spider sheltering in my hedge, raindrops like chandeliers hanging from your web.
I love you, Perseus and red-eyed Mars.
I love you, wet grass sticking to my bare feet.
I love you, Pluto. I love you, Eris and Ceres.
Oh, how I love you.

Always the rain comes.
And always and over again, I fall.

METRONORTH

This train barrels recklessly forward, plunging deeper into the cavernous abyss,
plowing headlong into the early dark of the
icy winter sky.

It rocks.

It bounces.

It spits pebbles from beneath its cold metal wheels.

It makes sparks that flicker briefly and then quickly die,
like someone stepping on fireflies.

It speeds up and slows down in perfect rhythm with the memories of you that dance before me,
your face reflected in the wide windows.

The naked branches of leafless trees tattoo the cobalt skyline
like a tribal band circling the bicep of the earth,
the way I'd tattoo my violet eyes on the pulsing left ventricle of your heart.

There are no crisp edges.

There are no absolute definitions.

There are just black spots cast in shadow,
like we were drawn in smudgy charcoals or cheap oil pastels.

We are like the sad unfinished houses littering the sides of the track,
their boarded up windows and doors never letting in any light.

We sort of started, but then never really happened.

I'd rather we were the old, dilapidated,
falling down houses that once teemed with life.

The train crosses the bridge between Woodbridge and South Amboy,
carrying me further away from you.

It crosses the bridge between conscious and subconscious,
carrying us further away from what we could have been.

And so,

when I step off this train,

I will let your memory go.

I will leave you,

like all lost things are left:

alone,

once vibrant colors faded by time and sunlight.

I want to remember you

I want to remember you
as you were in summer.

That fierce, golden orb floating weightlessly above us,
shining on the long, winding stretch of California highway.
Its blinding white reflection illuminating the odd street sign or passing car.

I want to remember you
basking in those amber rays,
the heat of so many July afternoons glowing red on your muscular back.
Sunburn didn't scare us.
Greedy mosquitos feasting, but we didn't care.
We couldn't feel the sting or itch of their meaty bites.

I want to remember you
As you were in winter,
standing on the edge of twilight,
the blizzard raging over the sea.
Our bodies fused together, melting blankets knit in snow,
and us, oblivious to the cold.
Our panting breath clouding the air with the heady fog of wanting.

I want to remember
the cigarette scratch of your midnight voice,
the indecent stare of your vulture eyes,
your fevered hands tracing constellations on my moonlit skin,
the famished kisses you nestled between my sighing shoulder blades,
your soft lips lingering at the intersection of hip and thigh.

I want to remember you
in morning.
How it felt, the two of us lying there.
The ease of your body curled into mine.
The early light slowly blooming in our waking eyes,
and how I counted the passing minutes
by the liquid measure of your breaths.

"I want you to notice if I'm not around. You're so fucking special. I wish I was special." Creep / Radiohead*

Adieu Mon Petit Oiseau de Nuit
(or: Goodbye my little night owl)

Missing you is a sickness.
The clammy-palmed,
coldsweat
of a
violent summer fever
sort of sickness.
And I,
shifting restlessly,
beneath a hundred woolen blankets -
piled high, and
full of scratch.
And you,
the weight
of your absence
pressing,
weighing me down.
I just can't shake this heaviness.

Heartsick and crumbling,
I,
wretched woman,
feel as though I have lost a limb.
Had you been my right thumb,
I think,
it would have been easier to part with you.

I do not want to move past this point,
to the time
when you and I do not exist
in any one place together.
Instead,
I sit quietly,
listening to the rain's somber lament.
Wondering if it is possible
to walk between raindrops
without getting wet.
I count the seconds
between lightening and thunder,
wishing you were
as close to me
as *electricity*.

Your silence rings in my ears
like choir bells.

Without you I am grey.
Dull.
A sad winter shadow.

It feels awful,
being
so easily
forgotten.

The unpleasant realization sinks in:
You have always been
more important to me,
than I suppose I ever was, or could be,
to you.

My heart clenches
as I take a deep breath
and turn
to walk away.

After all and everything,
and despite our being nothing,
really,
to each other,
goodbye
seems too
small
a word
to say to you.
But how can I,
how can anyone,
truly let go without it?

So I'll write it to you in French,
because it sounds romantic, and not quite
so final:
Adieu mon petit oiseau de nuit. Tu vas me
manquer. Toujours.
*Toujours.***

* From the song "Creep," written by Radiohead, Albert Hammond, and Mike Hazlewood and performed by the band Radiohead.

** Goodbye my little night owl. I'll miss you. Always. *Always.*