

Freeman.

She
tells the story
of the time
I almost got away

(Escaping
the complex

where I was given my name
first, a version of a word
heard bouncing around
the borders –

where I witnessed
the Thriller debut
through a mask of woven fingers
wary of monsters,

while
cinnamon shadows
swung
at one another
next to novelty wooden spoons –

when I was no older
than three,

She
stumbled upon me,
several city blocks away,
sitting on a milk crate,
sucking on a Sugar Daddy,

smiling.)
seemingly
without a scratch.

The Only Ones.

that
first year.
I got
bit
real
hard
by
this snake

who,
for reasons
debated to this day,
baited by
dangling prey,
struck

and caught me
with those jaws
instead,
and
held on with a hunger

that was
...
prehistoric.

There was a girl
there
with eyes bright like
fresh blood
drops
on white, washed denim,

her mouth open, rounded
to a soundless shout,
while I pleaded for release,

and learned
two lessons about this life

(One
instinct *is*
the enemy of free will,

and two
serpents are not
the only ones

in the world
with teeth.)

Sugar Glass.

I was

distracted

and

I lost my breath looking
backwards.).

I can't
seem to shake the signals,
the hint at

missed opportunities
at straps and lines,
hiding
out loud,

leaning in
too close –
unintentionally insidious,

delicious tension

lending lascivious images
to deliberate daydreams
that'll keep me out of Heaven
and out of the stories you tell

when I'm gone,
left in pieces
between your fingers.
Remember that

this was predicted,
that
I was subject to crumble

(From the jump,

* * *

Les Réfugiés.

(Paris, 2001)

we inhaled,
imbibing,
bottles
 repurposed,

danse le rue de trois,
sketching stories
 with our fellow ghosts –

sleeping
 outdoors,
 awaken by the elusive
 and fueled by rumor,

spending
 hostel nights
 breaking furniture,
 burning, and taking turns
 guessing names

and coming
 oh
 so close,

dancing
 a dare
 beneath blinking, pink neon,
 twisting hips

pour
les étrangers noirs,

 pretenses
 piling
 up neatly at our heels –

we were
 beau
 tiful.

Once,
 we were

 anonymous,

high
above the world, and
half a day
out of time,

before
the haircut,
cracked lips
tapping fannies,
and clashes over
hidden costs.

Before
the faint,
but familiar
scent
(Something
spoiled
long ago.)

Slip_in.

Beyond the break
through,

what will be
left

over
when I finally fall
in
to sleep –

lulled by
collections of selected
scenes
left to play

in the dark,
drowning

out

the tapping
of the steel-toe
steady threatening
to slip off her foot

(And for a fresh second,
forget

that I get
little time on the surface
to breathe.)

?

Even now,

wide awake,
I walk like the ice won't crack,
careless,

like I know how to swim –
as though I were made
for the cold.