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Edward Hopper's Nighthawks

-a conversation-

Act I

You tell me Francis is your favorite saint, tell me of secret gardens in the country and hidden cities in the spaces between words. You build a ladder with every sigh, promise to show me the way. I am no longer afraid of falling and wait only for the moment when gravity takes us there.

I will tell you that rain beats down and forms thin rivers, that olives fiercely cling to stems, and the earth succumbs. I will tell you about a passageway made of stone, tucked on the edge of a hill. This is the place to fall to your knees, to forget everything you know about loss. The idea of heaven was born in such a sanctuary. It is a long hike up to Assisi, but if you let me, I will take your hand, and take you, there.

I have found the idea of heaven in the slight part of your lips, the curve of your calf is a sanctuary and I will fall to my knees and forget. Forget everything before there was you and fiercely cling to a future braided in pale blue skies. Take me up the hill, listen for my footsteps and know that I believe in the sanctity of dirt and stone.

Act II

I will make you wait until the rain pounds to the beat of your heart, and the branches sway like I do when you slip your hand into my back pocket. I watch the light play on your jaw, trace the bone with the palm of my hand, run my finger down your throat and make you forget every thing you've swallowed up until now. I pull you into the rain, watch as you fill your mouth with it, watch a smile spill and know that I will never get this moment again, but to have it once, might be enough.

I want to catch a falling star on my tongue, feel it melt down my throat, contemplate every wisp of grey in your hair and count each secret that hides there. Confess my imagined sins to you in the silence between our breaths and watch as you trace my tattoo, whisper redemption in my ear.

Because imagined sins are as lovely as real ones and I'm jealous of your tattoo, wish to be under your skin, a part of you. Want to fall on your tongue, shine silver and melt there. Gray colors the world and I am of it; made of dirt and desire, a smoldering fire. Because each secret I have, I have because of you, and *rapture* meant nothing until you.

Act III

Silver is the color of the sky at dusk. I marvel at the smoothness of your skin as rust stained clouds cover the moon and a shroud of smoke leaves night without a way to escape. Right now, we can outrun fear and remain safe in each others secrets--right now we know we are truly made of the same dirt and fire.

I want to dig below the snow, find a handful of soil and burn it. Mark your body with its ash. Let you mark mine. I search for shards of beauty to give you, ask you to enfold me in your rust stained clouds as I get lost in the smoke of your words. I do not want to escape, will confess every crime, every imagined sin just to be in your company. Fear is a blanket we'll wrap around each other, shed when we no longer need it.

Tell me every story you know, again and again, until I am filled with nothing but you. Tell me about scabbed elbows and braids, morning and bare feet padding to the window to trace frost with your finger. Tell me about your first wish, the smoothest stone that skipped across the water and how you felt yourself in each ripple and wave. Let me cup your voice in my hand, carry it with me until the snow melts and the air smells like wet leaves.

Act IV

Every story I know begins with you, every twig in my hair I got searching for you in the underbrush, every stubbed toe from chasing your shadow, every cold and frosted pane I wrote your name on, watched the sun erase it until only I knew it was there. I have only this wish: to know how a star feels as it burns, fills the sky with light, and the heavens with its song. You are the stone, I am the water; each word you toss breaks me into a thousand silver-tipped waves. Watch how I spill from your hands, am always circling.

My hands become raw, cracked and dry until I can feel the soft coolness of your skin. Every story or legend of being lost begins with me, me lost in you. And you have only to search through your words, sort through all your unfinished poems and stories left in scattered piles at your feet, and you will find me. I am at once whole and completely stranded, my original sin is to be with you, in your skin and in your bones. I wait for benediction to come from your lips and would drown in those thousand waves if it meant one more glimpse of you.

Each word from your lips is a blessing, the sound of your voice, a prayer. Tell me about the blackest nights, the ones you wished to cheat death, skim the earth's surface as your thoughts cracked and parched the earth, turned it cold to your touch. Tell me about the echo of your voice in an vacant alley, how you felt at home there. Tell me these are dreams you rarely have now, for they are too heavy to carry, now that you are filled with light. Tell me that if I was Ophelia you would pull me from the river, place your lips on mine, and fill my lungs with you.

Act V

I want to tell you everything, open all the dark pages of the past, spread them at your feet; a book that only you can read. I want to tell you how the sun used to spit fire down my throat. How the night abandoned me for another lover, how I didn't stop running even after there was nowhere left to go. I want to tell you how my voice went rough from cigarettes and loss, how my fingers were cut from broken glass and unfulfilled expectations- I want to tell you how I spent my life looking for you only I didn't know your name.

Nor did you know your own. So when I called for you, you could not answer, could not come and let me bandage your forehead, kiss every wound. And now when I say it, love, the world slows and the clouds part. That when I think it, I know why Menelaus fought nine years for a glimpse of Helen. Know that I would climb into the belly of a beast to be near you, just to have your words in my ear, your hand within reach.

I am as close as the next breath you take, close as the thought being born in your mind, close as the blank page in front of you. Now is the time for me to brush the twigs from your hair, wash the stain of weariness from your skin with my kiss. I will get lost again and again but I will always know I am with you. I will erase the sun from the sky so we can sleep, wake as the moon sets, find the salvation we need in (the arms of) each other.