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Edgar Diel

A Lonely Duet

One step between us. One step between me and the window. By making this one step I tear myself away from the imprisonment of the bed, escaping towards the window, that square of sky gleaming through the wall. I fling it open. As always, a shudder shakes the window and the door at the other end of the room simultaneously as though scared of the outside. Or, as if both in their old white wooden frames were the only visible elements of a skeleton pervading the whole apartment. Those soundless moments when the room collapses, smothers you are sudden and without warning. Unmoved earthquakes. Recurring visitors in seclusion. It is always the cruel who return.

The world penetrates the room in a delightful conquest. Finally, the screaming white of the walls is eased by the distant echo of foreign colours. Out there, in life, dusk is about to emerge. The old chestnut trees breathe birdcalls. Two of them remain in wintery mourn whilst all the others form a flood of youthful green running through the street as far as one can see. But further I cannot see. Nobody is given more than his window. Windows are the worlds. Windows and memories. I am leaning out over the window still, my feet barely on the floor, and by closing my eyes I start to fly. There is no mercy in the kiss of the air. It is a siren sliding on sunlight, caressing my stubble with malicious joy. The brief and voluntary blindness, a black fall damned never to meet the ground, transforms you. Your place in life has changed. You listen.

As world is filling the room, I step back towards the bed. The sheets weigh like clouds only do. Benevolently, the outer silence absorbs the unbearable stillness of

the walls. I keep flying in the sheets. There is nothing left but the world outside, the sky, the trees. It is only for them that I have not dissolved in insanity long ago. And there it is again. The applause begins. At first, the couples of hands still are somehow hesitant. I pray that they stop, that they lack the power to perturb, to narrow the breadth of the evening. I pray in vain, though. It grows quickly. They pour it from their balconies like boiling oil on besiegers and set the street on fire. The air is infected.

Too tired to move, I listen to the climax of their manual merrymaking. It boosts to cheer. And thus, applauded by the whole neighbourhood, I drop off. Eve for eve that applause without bow. My dreams dwell upon the times when I sat in an audience, the times I have entertained one. Before, in the other life... When I wake up, the hands are still calling. But their voice breaches as their number shrinks. The last ones clean the stage, close the black velvet curtain back into silence. Then they hush. They close.as flowers in the evening glow return to the state of voiceless buds.

One couple, though, resists.

They continue to clap, wildly and arbitrarily as if hitting each other in strife. A following instant of silence paints the illusion of peace, which perishes almost immediately. From to a lukewarm ceasefire and returns to torment. I believe all that to happen within seconds, but I cannot know. Since the swoon of the old life, clocks have been overcome by time. Who owns those hands? A child? A madman? Now that the fishing net, knotted out of obligation and occupation, is washed ashore in deserted lands, the children and maniacs deep in us are floating upwards. I wonder about the hands' appearance. Are they laboured hands, thick-fingered and coarse? Or do the skinny fingers resemble spider-legs, with a paper skin disclosing the skeleton like a delicate coloration the drawing underneath? I listen to the interplay of sound and silence. I float in it. The variation of the intervals seems to lack any structure but then, bit by bit, the ear believes to notice some regularity. Rhythm crystalizes. At first reluctantly, like a young actor struggling with a role, yet with rising self-awareness. It forms a flighty lifeline with no screen, heading towards the ear. A string of sound, a thread sung by Ariadne, a bright embroidery on a ground of birdcalls.

The sound finds a friend. Instead of more clapping it happens to be the tuning of a guitar clearing its throat. The way it sounds, it must come from another part of the street. The hands follow the guitar, the guitar follows the hands. They result in the surprise of noise-making lovemaking. One starts to sing. Throaty, with a voice full of notches, it sings one of the old, rusty, bittersweet songs which so easily grasp the hearts.

And the hearts won't even attempt to oppose. The hands, fallen asleep as I woke up, open their eyes. Cheer surges through the street, which is being transformed into an echoing valley by speakers put out there by someone. The hand choir celebrates the balcony's sudden serenade, but this time so much more honest. Merging they challenge the silence. And so it goes on for a while and I lie, motionless, and so do my hands, motionless. Gradually, out there, the tide goes down. The anonymous conductors retire, return to their cells, and the concert of the convicts comes to an end. Of a deep blue is now the sky. The rose of dusk has faded. Evening breathes an altered, an injured stillness, ornamented only with a few nocturnal birdcalls, scattered like strummed strings. Chill, cold even, enters the room. The cold of a life frozen, of a spring lingering in winter sleep. A gust of wind makes the trees whisper. The cool night air is biting me, it enlivens me, weaves dreams. I am in bed and I hear, no, listen to the trees. I freeze. I close my eyes. And almost I am there. Outside.

Sunset

Father is dying.

I run into the forest. The birds' singing is unperturbed. The wooden silence of the trees seems empty of compassion. The golden shafts of sunlight, falling through the green, glimmering leaves, are unbroken.

I am trying to dig His stertorous breathing, His sunken distant eyes, His paper skin into to the cruelly imperturbable beauty of nature. Instead of swallowing the image down, it conquers its way out of me. I scream at Him. I scream at the forest. I box the oak's trunk until the fire in my fists forces me to surrender. The defeat is unconditional. Years of silence, years of distance, of pride, disguised as hatred and childish ignorance dilute in tears. The copper-coloured foliage softens my fall. Their smooth embracement feels like mere derision. My bloody hands torture the leaves' corpses, crumple them, tear them apart. So do my tears, destroying their shape, the shape of everything. I am weeping in a world of sound and colours.

This place gives trembling flesh to my remembrance. Here I had departed from Him. For the first time. Here occurred what I thought to be our last fight.

I hear the commanding sound in this voice of steel and it automatically evokes defiance. I want to leave for the Big Town again, for the country of cloud-kissing towers where the promise of liberty resided in the eyes of the child. I hear his insults, followed by the year-lasting insult of silence. The outcast of the son seemed absolute. But wars can have many fights.

I remember everything. The house was gilded in the light of sunset, its windows dazzled, just as now.

Philipp did not come with me.

My body stops trembling. He is in the blind house behind the trees. I must depart from Him. One last time.

Father is dying.

Wandering among my friends

A Pseudo-Romantic fantasy

Your sweet speech,
Dear friends who never talk,
Seems out of reach
For every mortal folk.

Your words are not words but wonders,
Gently dripping tender timid thunders
Whose whisper-winds send waves of light
Voiceless voices beyond wrong or right
Through the wanderer's troubled mind
And make him cease his steps and think
"Ere I reached that Twilight-land, I was to sink
In the mire of men, was foolish, weary, blind."

Once I deemed my garden full of flowers
And winter seemed a most remote concern.
The grateful eye, worldwards cast, for hours
Revelled in how princely petals beautifully burn.
From the morning's cheerful lucid laughter
Until rose the moon, Selene's sign and carter,
and hissed the star-eyed night, and rising to its height,
it Clothed us both in Blue and taught the skin to sing,
The flesh to gleam, the breath to steam, the lips on lips to sink.

The tide of night is up, roaring to its height,
oh darkness you proved twin and soul of light!
The void of body's embellished by embraces.
One hand the other kisses, grasps, and chases.
The lonely body's innate and bare austerity
blossoms up in bliss and sweet serenity.
But no night does last forever...
Day is called the golden fever
Which restores the colours,
carves the shadows deeper

and to wake up all does call us.
Thus, my garden I did leave behind
And sought a greenery of purer kind.
And I found you, cloud-kissing towers.
Caress me through all hours following the sun:
eve's and nights and noons and morrows.
Meek yet deep endurance thereby sorrows
melt away and hope it is what follows.

Here the remnant of the storm is but a breeze.
The torment you hath gently cut apart.
Thanks to you, dear friends, once more peace,
By wandering among you, moves my heart
Wherein a rosebud now unfurls to see you, trees.