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Hudson Sonnets

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Hudson Sonnets

1

Each morning, I serve you three bananas.
They're small, I tell myself, but on their way
to being lethal. Love is always
impatient, unkind. I think of a woman's
life, how long it takes her to write one book.
I think of the black and blues that mark my
chin and knees from walking too fast. Meanwhile
I've stopped touching your face. When I look
in your eyes, I see nothing but fire.
It's Christmas. I buy you a present
because I have to. Lonely or sad,
rosy or blue, love is too intense.
You overwhelm me with your powers.
I'm afraid my own will drive us both mad.

2

Here we are again, home with the lights fading.
"We'll have a Christmas tree," you say. "A tree
in the house will warm us. Before long we'll be
standing together, loving our tree, loving
each other."

Gone the hunter, the captor,
the lust for blood. You're back with your wisdom,
your Windham Hill records, your easy grin.
Inside my headphones I'm frightened or
do I crave the assault of the familiar?
Love hides in shadow like poison arrows,
thirsts for the brush of skin, the hushed voice
of night. I hear Tama drums and wonder:
Will I turn my back on surviving alone?
When you touch me, will I have a choice?
3

There are fiddles in my head, gentle rhythms
anyone could sleep to, quiet tones
that hurt though they’re not supposed to.
You say you love me. I find your arms
too hot, your need deep as a prism
that fractures white light. Am I insane?

I dreamt I died and felt no fear of pain.
Now I fly down Hudson, duck the Tappan
Zee, head for stations south. The river is
particularly gray. You pushed me out of
bed today, set yourself free. The final sin
is mine. I talked to God, said all this
running drives me crazy. She said: Love
plays a fiddle in your ear. Listen.

4

Deserted by loved ones during the night,
you’ll find yourself the only parade
on this side of the Hudson, displayed
before you: one sharp knife in a pool of light.

This is significant: the light, the knife.
For years I swore you were trying to do
me in with thimbles full of port. You knew
my weakness for the grape. Was I right?

A woman with red hair reads quietly while
she eats. The room is empty. The river
flows by as usual. There’s an odor
of the past, an echo of ice cubes like
the day we moved from the city upstream
to begin the unfolding of dreams.
The red-haired woman sips wine at a window table. Presented with salad, she stares across the Hudson as if saying a prayer.

I myself have rarely been alone. When I am, I wonder who will touch me, strain to remember my favorite color, step carefully as if walking on water. The river seems to flow beneath my feet.

I imagine carving my initials on the face of a cliff, rowing downstream from Croton to New York harbor where the Atlantic, splayed with sunlight, hails me. No memories pursue. The ocean fills my cheeks with wind, my hair with salt air.

Midnight: I wear gray wool socks, blue jeans and a cotton shirt the color of pumpkin. No one can see me. My car is leaning against a snowbank on 81st Street. I sit with my back to a picture window overlooking the park. There are no ghosts here. I am no longer trembling. My hair reflects the color of my shirt. It glows in soft light while you sleep miles up-river near the hills of Croton, unaware of my flight or your freedom. I hear classic guitars, six of them, while synthesizer weaves in and out, connecting sounds, fine threads that cross the air like new music.