

Snapshots of Two Intersecting Lies

POETRY

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Gold Medal, **Best-in-Grade Award**

This poem is a contrapuntal. The columns may be read individually or together from left to right. It is recommended each vignette is read individually and then together, in chronological order.

i. Concerto No. 1 in E Major — Antonio Vivaldi

The first time I saw you under fluorescent lights
on the New York subway & your smile set alight
a kaleidoscope of gossamer butterflies flying toward
a fragmented Elysium /
I was falling into roaring flames &
I was lost
to the keening song of spiraling snakes
—I thought it was the blood of gods—
that ran through your gold-papered veins

You held my heart in paint-splattered hands
a burning torch raised like
the Lady Liberty / You plunged it into
the wreckage of my splintering heart / but
fire cauterizes any wound.
In a dreamless daze
the marigold petals sewn over my lacerated feet
crumbled into black crow's-wing ashes
(but you turned your head away). *Click!*

ii. Red Hill and Bones — Georgia O'Keeffe

You found me at the conservatory that November afternoon
extended your hand to me & said: Let's go on a journey
to nowhere. We stole pomegranates from fruit carts,
ruby droplets of bright sweetness.
cadaver discarded on the pavement /
to be crushed under the feet of a thousand
New Yorkers / We walked past Harry Houdini & I knew you were
magical in some way no one could ever seek to destroy

Blood dripping from a thousand cuts & through a liquid veil
beyond the forbidden land
pried apart stubborn rinds to reveal white enamel encasing
callused fingers stained with scarlet tears; We left the
You were
innocent
beautiful & dangerous—
(but I did it anyway). *Click!*

iii. Piano Sonata No. 14 — Ludwig van Beethoven

Midnight, you watched as I uncovered the ancient pianoforte
in the opulent foyer of your penthouse apartment /
I said I wish I could capture this moment & preserve it /
forever & you smiled in such a melancholy longing I saw
the war-torn wastelands of your heart in those vacant eyes

We were holy beneath the illumination of silver starshine
your lips engrave the image of you into my skin /
but like smoke in rising moonlight, that part of us is lost
in an uncrossable chasm guarded by your nightmares
(where I may never venture). *Click!*

iv. The Houses of Parliament, Sunset — Claude Monet

In March we sat on the roof of your apartment /
watching the sun disappear beneath the jagged skyline
into the crepuscular harbor beyond. We sipped
from quasi-crystal goblets & you told me
you could have been a billionaire, but instead you
drink cheap wine on New York rooftops /
to stay close to your dying mom & sickly brother & me

I said goodbye, so why do I still remember
as I told you my childhood dreams & dominoes toppled
in screaming silence / I heard a shattering of clocktowers
in the faraway city of London /
wrap your arms around me &
vow
(you will never let me go). *Click!*

v. La Mer — Claude Debussy

Sitting on the dock overlooking the sea, our feet skimmed
the foaming tips of ocean waves; tendrils of sun lingered
in the aestival air / You were ethereal in the purple dawn:
an angel rising above the gates to heaven (or maybe hell) varnished in mercurial ashes (or covered in writhing white lies).
But bruises were shadowing your hollow eyes / How many tears were shed from those haunted vessels when
I leaned over to kiss your salt-cracked lips / (one last time) / you told me you were leaving for Paris
& the color of your lipstick the next morning
stains my teeth maroon / me—shattered—on a lost isle in the vast Atlantic
the shape of half-truths & broken pinky-promises (you never even deigned to look back). *Click!*

vi. Charred Landscape — Lee Krasner

I thought I set us free, but part of me died in transit Walking alone along the desiccated beaches of crimson coasts
you brought out good in me that never existed & now I am drowning beneath the weight of sins I cannot regret &
neck-deep in bottles of priceless wines / Cinders curl around mists of laburnum perfume concealing
the marbled floors of my apartment & I see you in fractured mirrors / your flowered reflection (segued into cold embers)
pulsing through my ruinous visage / But I cut our bonds & I turned my head from your blazing carcass so
even if the desolate prairies of my heart wither & die you would not see the rivers flowing down my sallow cheeks &
perhaps the gilded forests of yours survive in another world
without the poisons of mine (perhaps you might be happy). *Click!*

vii. Fantasy Overture — Pyotr Tchaikovsky

Letters flew on the backs of turtledoves from New York Birds of rust-iron feather soar
across oceans blue / to drown in the picturesque waters of the Seine upon bloodied shrapnel & gunshot wings /
Could I have seen in oil canvas Monet / tossing pebbles over to your bedroom window,
two years' manacled ghosts in search of new beginnings acrid & bitter like burning scar-line.
Yet in pomegranate seeds & cheap rosé / Take the shot bottoms-up, fire stinging my eyes
yellow flowers in trails weeping gold-drenched tears, memory-vessels explode in starfire brilliance &
still I feel your gaping absence, an unfinished crossword we scattered across plastic subway seats in inky blots /
that we can never complete (so flip to the next page). *Click!*

viii. Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog — Caspar Friedrich

Piece by piece I gathered the broken scraps & silver dust I blew life into an effigy of us, delicate glass
pseudo-lives ready to crumple at a touch
shattering against the concrete walls of Avalon / I fell to my knees & in a drunken rage, I smashed the porcelain dolls
upon shards of empty champagne bottles slick with blood (or tears) /
broken & beautiful, a fractal mosaic / & in the remnant debris
a figure ran through a cloud-haze of lacquered memories I mapped a path home
to a place I remembered yet had never been; my dandelion soul carried unspoken wishes & undreamt dreams /
In racing parabolas, I arced across an unknown sea / I loved it because it was ruined, because it was
where I found... (me). *Click!*

ix. Symphony No. 2 — Gustav Mahler

On the A line from Times Square to Wall Street, The train I met you that October night fifteen years ago,
a woman from a memory I cannot place still smelling of pomegranate teeth & goldenchain tree,
folds her crossword twice closed & sips scalding Ceylon tea / the phantom of you blurs
the color of her amber tresses. We step off together; she turns toward me & opens her mouth as if to speak, but she walks
right & I turn left and we are just two people lost, hidden away & silhouettes disappear amidst the cemetery metropolis
in the crowded empty of the City of Dreams (New York). *Click! ■*