

FANTASY IN C# MINOR FOR TRUMPET AND ORCHESTRA

You didn't expect him here amid silk draperies and life-size classic stone sculpture. Nobody knew where he came from behind the fountains and topiary shapes. But when he turned, you knew he was a trumpet man:

Son of a long, ragged line who inhaled used smoke and applause to blow from bulging cheeks,

and the black case followers, the rolled-up bus riders down the stretched streaking nights, who, closing their eyes saw brass hanging over them, floating easy, waiting hugely to be snatched and buried or at least sabotaged for a night or two of peace and supremacy—who saw it turn to an armored snake in jealous helpless hands, belling laughter on three ribs, tonguing out morning and a hangover in some mispronounced town.

Nobody saw this loose angled one pick it up; the instrument came like quick cell division from his fingers, his tough lip. And the sound began:

Uncoiling slow, coming for us, crawling into our skins, changing the texture of our bare arms.

You know that sound, mama? Nothing so simple as heartbreak, Eili Eili

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wild animals moaning up the moon. His quicksilver eyes ignite
and lightning arcs from his hair
striking a conductor that zaps it into your gravity center.

The sound, mama,
leaching tones out of ^{the}/marble statues, rearranging
molecules, making them glow like neon in fog,
fulminating red and purple,
alive like magnified pond water.

How much is music, dropped now half a step,
gone minor again, flowing that little groove
where pain runs concave to the surface?
How much is the glint of jet-cut crystal hanging from silver
arches, moving slowly with audience breathing,
striking flints in his pale eyes?
Pushing aside champagne, women whisper:

"He's too much—a collection of priceless vibes
in badly tailored suede." "He's a lone seance
with Gershwin and Gabriel, Debussy and Berrigan
and all the shining ones." "I'd like—" "I wish—"

He is a prophet: Forecasting rain,
blowing out the sun, predicting your heartbeat,
willing it, playing your spine like a keyboard,
electrifying veins. He compresses a grain of hot salt
in every pore, starts a hundred little internal
combustions, all pistons at odds, then one enormous
turbine synched with his,

generating enough current to throb down the columns,
revving the riderless carriage outside the fourth dimension.

He grins suddenly, mockingly, flats his fifths
then goes south on a short bridge, tootles to the carved unicorn,
puffs out the foyer candles along with the illusions
so for a jigger of time you can stand it,
draw your breath on the afterbeat, see
he is a real live trumpet man, not a sorcerer, not
a fakir pulling the cobra out of your basket.

He is a child: Blowing bubbles of incredible light,
each expanding on its own rainbow, clustered
with tiny replicas inside seeking to merge
with music. The trumpet his mistress and mentor,
an open-flower soul in his hands, a reformed panpipe
converted by his kiss.

He is Imperial Rome: An announcement of gladiators,
Caesar chariots, a boast of soldiers, a fury of fire-fleeing.
He is Africa: Black rhythm-cry, leopard stalking,
impala bleeding, eyes looking out of water,
torch eyes in darkness burning edges of night,
smoke rising, curling on winged scales,
sucking back into the bell, recycled in his brain.

He slams a fist back in your throat, your loins,
he turns you on a spit and hamstrings you
with blades of ice.

He stands knee-deep in hell, his head into heaven,

cont.

holds onto the horn, wrestles it, shares it
with devils and seraphs, wrests it away,
triumphant sovereign-slave.

Feel the sound, mama? He's concentrating on all
your edges now, honing, tuning, fining sharp, sharper,
thin, thinner. Quivering on a sill to somewhere,
retiring to a small glistening waver in a hair's spectrum,
pulsing between green and turquoise, hanging
on like dying gills.

He's a trumpet man, mama, more lives than a cat,
more wind than a Kansas twister.

It's all the magic horn, mama, that
glossy eternal alloy always suspended
between you, even in bed,
shaping you to it, branding you. That

gilded haloed concubine, caressed and polished, surrounded
with plush. You, bleached, smacked, sewing a dress
out of motel curtains, earning your M.A. in martyrdom. That
accused fetish, possessed, possessing. That icon
he hocked once to buy you an emergency doctor in Detroit.
You sold your mother's ring to get it back.

And the man, mama, with the hard harsh mouth,
dead weight in the bus seat, little slivers of life
scattered and telescoped into battered cases and collapsible
stands. Trumpet man. Pitched all shades and sizes like
shadows, worse for women than drummers.

Gone too high too often. A pile
 of singed feathers dripping wax on the downers, always
 patching to fly one more set too close to the sun.
 Trumpet man. Slow-moving target
 for shooting galleries, fifty-two small pasteboards,
 and heavy bookies, mean as a bull when you got between.

Was there a man at all?
 Or just a flared gold phallus that seduced you
 and crammed you into the gears of a music box on wheels,
 hurled you across the bad weather map, into the broken-john hotels
 with faded lint bedspreads, and the watered-gin back-corners
 of never-quite-level-halls full of lurching bodies and bad acoustics?
 Trumpet man. Inseparable composite
 of flesh and that wind-thing you both die in different ways
 without— cold spite for your touching,
 hot pipe to all we know of paradise for his.

Tears emptied for the last set, he mounts
 the god syndrome like mercury,
 transcends music and sound, an entity
 not protoplasm and metal but some new alchemy,
 entering entrails and hair shafts
 to that last submerged panging tunnel you had sealed and secured.
 Deep, forcing down your fiercest barriers,
 playing what no mortal ever played, filling
 you, driving deeper yet overhead, levitating. Slamming
 in the afterburner, rocketing upward, peeling
 off new notes like bright blisters, Inhaling, exorcising

the whole orchestra, resolving each chord himself,
breaking his lip down to blood, excoriating his lungs.
White involves you in Olympic cloud banks, immaculate;
nothing hurts anymore.

Old festers are incised clean, drained and benedictioned.
The trumpet fluoresces, fuses
with his phosphorous eyes; vivid crystal globules
orbit like berserk planets
around and through his lean cylinder of light until
the entire image blazes beyond looking.

You open your eyes as the waiter pours champagne,
hear something shut like a latch, focus absently
on a white alabaster herald
you hadn't noticed before.