

Rapture Waltz,

Inspired by the Johnny Manchild Album, "Rapture Waltz"

Cooper Morgan

Fake Me Out

I exist here, lost. Lost in this moment. Lost in the way she moves, her arms gently gliding through the air as if commanding the very space around her; her body, shuffling rhythmically, deliberately each moment in total union to the sounds that guide her; her eyes, adorned of such pure sincerity, an innocence born of her passion to perform in these waking hours. And I am lost, lost in this way that she moves, this way that she simply *is*.

Lost in this... moment.

With every passing instance born of this moment, a new sentiment of her being would reveal itself to me. The soft wrinkles whose gentle form brought about a genuine tenderness in her tranquil smile, one that persisted in this forever moment. The way her stark black dress folded in tandem with her body, as if an extension of her own form, one whose celestial, starry shapes and patterns were too reflected in those guileless eyes of hers. The locket, a stunning piece that seemed to exude a passionate love, that rested unobtrusively, respectfully on the bare skin of a proud chest.

You could say to me that within this moment passed a million years, that in the time I spent observing this apparition of immaculacy the entire world around me had lived on, that people lived, and died, and were born, and lived, and died. You could tell me that, and I might truly believe you because in this moment I was truly, unequivocally lost, lost in her...

This is not an unfamiliar listlessness, not unique to me or this moment. It is the kind borne of something primal - that is to *want*. I've wanted before, and I have seen want before, and in either case I have felt, seen its many manifestations. Like a beast ensnared by the barbs and wires of humanity wants to scream and howl and beg. Like a child promised a uniquely special life, bound for whatever greatness their heart so desires, so *wants*. Like a man, so apathetically circling the drain of life with a cynical, sombreness - one whose despair is born of the knowledge that it is no beast ensnared by those barbs and wires, but it is man, woman, a people whose bodies have been battered and wrung, left tethered to the weight of their own reality, watching the world around them crumble piece-by-piece, clinging to the miracle of life they've been given, with nothing but *the want for things to be better* - a man who hangs on by a single thread now. The thread of desire. The thread that is to want.

I have seen such wants, and have been enriched by them. But being enriched means recognising to what source these wants spawn from, and thus being forced to acknowledge that it is *other wants* that beget our own. *Want* is actualised by virtue of the many other *wants*, the careless, selfish wants of the many - those whose wants defy our own, whose wants mimic our own, whose wants aim to occupy the position of our own. And so, I have felt, seen the many manifestations of *wanting*, and have learned that this desire can be one pure - but it is one that will forever remain tethered to the notion of the delicate nature of a *want not meant for you*.

In this moment, this lost moment, I *wanted*. A careless, selfish want. A want most delicate.

This want had consumed and paralysed me in form and concept. As I continued to gaze upon her, the very depiction of angelic, as seconds felt like hours become days become years, my entire being felt as if warped, a veil of an endless yearning enveloping me, embellishing me, ensnaring me in some new reality. Each step taken towards her by another made me writhe, each reaching, grabbing, lifeless grasp outstretched towards her, their warped extremities trying to pierce Her domain, trying to bring her down from her home in the clouds to the decrepit depth of their own crypts - and then, how could my own stained hands be any different? In their own fingers was a want of theirs, a selfish want that defied my own - but how can I be holier than thou? How might my own hands have earned this want, this delicate want, in a way that these dancing rats could not have? Truth could not be told from among the many falsehoods in this moment that lasted forever, this lost moment that begets want, that delicate-

Stop.

Everything stopped. This endless moment stopped, their outstretched extremities stopped, my *want* stopped. Everything stopped. A single truth had forced its way between the sheets of this veil, and as the world around me *stopped*, I felt it. A force born of these delicate wants. For when you want, and reach, and take, and *have* – then, only then does regret begin to fester, spread and overwhelm. And that is what has now arrested me from my moment, my time, my want – the very notion of regret.

I know of regret, and I have seen regret. I carry with me many regrets. I refuse to recall them - that is the very *essence of regret*. It is what comes with purity like hers. It is when purity like hers *exists*. It is when the hands of the holy beget in a person listlessness. It is when the listless rats deem themselves worthy to let such a sensation beget in them want, failing to recognise the way their dirty tails and sour teeth might ruin that which was perfect. It is when, as fast as the feeling first found them, that perfection bleeds out in their paws, dripping and congealing and bubbling, soaking and staining. It is when your hands become a filter, letting that perfection which allured you escape, tarnished by your touch. And all that you hold now is simply regret.

What happens to me if my *want* goes awry? I hold on to the last sentiments of the moment once present, now ripped from me, and recall her. Her, the very depiction of angelic. Was I wrong to want her? Would she become my festering regret? Her very presence has me trembling - I am left in a space devoid of all, reaching for that final draw on my last breath. With just this, her waltz, the rapture has come, and I am left one of the rats wondering if it is with Her that I go. Does that mean I cannot want her, cannot have her, is this want too selfish, vile, delicate, festering, bleeding...

The notion that she before me, who commands the wind, who exists in union with the rhythms around her, whose presence implicates purity, might become one of these regrets, it shakes me.

It shakes and haunts me. I hate it, I hate this truth that has made its way to me, I hate the way it has frozen this moment of mine – and yet I cannot deny it. I want this, I feel on many layers of my being that I *should* want it, that I *should* claim it – but the truth that I may, that I *will* regret this has me submitting - my want, delicate thought it may be, has been made apparent, and in its forever moment has me needing, *wanting* more...

The world around me shatters. The veil through which regret had once slipped now tightens. Unaware, I felt my nails dig into my ribs, as I reel from the recollection of such regrets. But now, I am left again in the moment. And I am left listless, yearning again for she who commands the room, commands the moment, commands...- but as quickly as life had returned, it again stopped, the veil again infiltrated.

The world around me shatters, again. The world around me stops, again. The world around me buffers and fizzles. My moment, lost moment, oscillates and shakes my vision – moment, stop, moment, stop, moment, stop, as if realities, moment, are shifting, stop. Inside out, moment, upside down, stop. Every sight, moment, every sound, stop. As if with every step, moment, She takes She is creating a new moment, stop. As if it is now, moment, that the world beckons me, stop, to submit to one, moment, or resign myself to that in which my world will, stop.

I tear my hands from my sides, and assail my gaze, tearing my eyelids open with my fingers and binding my jaw in place, that it remains on her, in an attempt to defy my flinching realities. I am left relinquishing myself now to the sight of her again. And between every moment in which I am unflinchingly arrested by her, my core is shaken with the notion that having her might ruin me. Will I regret? Can I move on? To want, to regret, with every step, moment, stop.

Moment.

Stop.

Moment.

Stop.

Moment.

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Release.

Released am I from this tormenting grip of convergent realities, of the universe tearing and clawing at me, released of this 'truth' that made its way, unwelcomed, into the warmth of that which envelops me in this moment. And it is in this moment I am again, lost. Lost in the way she continues to move. Lost in a delicate *want*, a want no longer defied by or in defiance of any other, no longer imposed upon by any notion of regret. She has appeared before me, her eyes now follow mine, and this has made me want - and why shouldn't I? And it is then that I let the want consume me. I yearn for this moment to be my reality, for this want to manifest, to dance with Her and waltz together towards rapture, to death, to life, to every day, I am prepared to make this reality mine.

Just one more moment. Just one more. One more.

I stand. I look straight ahead. All else in this room is lost to me, as I am lost in her. I step. I look into those eyes whose purity entranced me so, whose gaze meets mine. I step again, and I do so knowing that at no moment will *this* moment be stopped. I approach her, and in this lost moment, I look at her.

And she looks back at me. And I ask for her hand. And I bow. And I kiss her hand, and I see that guileless smile. And I ask her to dance. And we dance. All in this moment, a moment born of a want, a delicate want, one that will not be stopped, one without a *hint* of regret.

And we dance, lost in the way we move.

Oh, Songbird

“... my love?”

In this moment, I had sunk into the physical comforts afforded me by the armchair. Its seat, once firm and stately, had become a tired, soft and comforting thing. It had gone long unused for a time, but these months had seen it now frequented by the comfort-seeking frames of myself and my love. And it had in this time deflated, not of weakness or defeat, but simply out of age – no longer did it need to keep itself rigid and inscrutable, for it knew that its purpose was being realised. This knowledge was enough for it to lower its guard and allow itself to embrace its future.

Yes, in this seat I had sunken, but only until I heard her voice call again. “My love?” she called, an inquisition propagating – no, inviting - my company. Her voice rang through the hall of our home, singing softly from the dining table to which she had yielded, over to the living room armchair to which I had, yes, sunken. Angelic. That was her voice, angelic, a soft, angelic, chattering songbird - my Songbird. A voice so gentle and supportive, as if always in harmony with whoever she spoke to – even herself. Such a voice could sway any man, woman, person – anyone would be soothed, swayed by her voice. I hadn’t needed this, of course – no, her very presence was enough to convince me. But rest assured, her voice was angelic and pure and real.

I stood, in response to her call. As I did so, the forms of the room around me began to slowly manifest, as if just waking from a dream. The armchair I had found so dearly to my liking these months was not alone, another chair idling next to it whose seat had, too, been supporting me and Songbird for a time now. Between the two, a coffee table rested, small but sizable enough for a couple to leave that which pleases them, a lamp and perhaps his and her teacups. I stepped, manoeuvring myself from the living space I had been resting in, through the hall and towards the kitchen. I didn’t stop, but passing through the hall my eyes fixated for a moment on the walls. Undeniably, they were quite a plain cream colour, unremarkable on their own - but it was for such reasons my eyes *remained* fixated, as upon these walls hung *moments*. Adorning its simple surface, many portraits of my Songbird and I floated weightlessly, those plain walls vanishing behind the frames. My eyes fell upon a moment, a photo of her - her eyes, starry, guileless eyes... I sunk into those eyes whose purity had entranced me so. And I made my way to the dining table, acquiring a seat across from her, my Songbird.

As I made myself comfortable, I returned to gazing upon my Songbird. Hers was a form defying apt description... Her hair seemed always perfect, done up delicately and deliberately in a gorgeous, voluminous chignon, and never would she be seen without her hair done such. The face framed by this was almost haunting in its unrelenting beauty - her eyes, endless pools, voids to get lost in... These small, yet limitless, starry spaces and their soft forms contrasted a strong, regal bridge, and under her nose... her smile. Yes that was it – her smile. Her smile was enrapturing, it was gripping, one from which I could not look away, lest it fades by the time I look

back. I could not look away, for it was a reflection of the joy she brought me, and I her, the edges of her gentle, soft lips scrunching up into the demure dimples welling up in her cheeks. Occasionally I could get her to laugh so genuinely that these dimples seemed to extend to the edges of her face, almost meeting the wonderful dangling nightingale earrings that she never removed...

This is all yet to speak on her presence, ignoring which would be to defy her of much of who she is; in everything she did, my love was elegant and graceful. As if every living moment was one set to music, she moved with deliberate precision, as if dancing to a rhythm, her hips swaying soft, yet sharp, quick yet defined; her chest would lock at will, yet never failed to seem fluid and loose... And as if her rhythm revealed to me, I could tell she had never missed a beat. The way she moved her arms, as if commanding the air around her. Her unfiltered elegance made it hard to miss her presence, and harder yet to not fall for her as I had.

I sat down, in a much more solid, yet similarly worn seat to the armchair I was resting in a moment ago. And in this *new* moment, across from me was my Songbird, with two saucers and cups of freshly brewed tea.

"My love," she said, though as if telepathically - her voice was so serenely tranquil, *real* and natural, that it felt inaudible. She smiled as she presented me with one of the cups. These cups were some of the nicest we had in the house, our house. Though small, they bore designs so intricate and detailed, a wonderful spectrum of colours and shapes imprinted upon the very being of these cups. They were the kind we would only use for when we were expecting guests, or when a special occasion had arisen. I knew that this moment was one free of company, free of those making their way unwelcomed into the warmth of that which envelops me – and so the only explanation that remained was that this was a moment my love decided warranted celebration. Yet, guilty though it made me feel, I could not fathom why.

Wrestling with my mind and memory in this moment for the notion of something I had perhaps forgotten, I tried to understand for what reason this was a special moment. For a moment, I thought I had almost recalled something... and yet, as I made the effort to bring forth this memory, I looked at my Songbird and saw her expression bore a new look somehow... I couldn't place it. Her composition had not changed, but it felt as if she knew what I had been thinking, knew my attempts at recall... were these efforts perhaps wasted? I couldn't tell, as she wouldn't speak – she was quiet, as if inaudible. But her and I, as if minds and bodies one in union, now seemed to understand something. Though her face remained unchanged, that gentle smile and those innocent eyes, I felt as if I understood. And so, I smiled.

I did not need to know why we celebrated. I did not need to recall anything, for there was nothing to recall. That is what she seemed to say to me through this silence, seemed to want me to know. And as if acted upon by an omnipotent force, my mind had been swayed at the sound of her voice that rang true through my being, an angelic voice, a voice that could soothe, sway anyone, as it now swayed me.

Having comforted myself now, reassured in this new moment, I lifted my cup with no second thoughts. I knew now that the past needed no recollection, nor did the future need preparation. It was this moment, yes this moment, lost in this moment, that we would celebrate - for what makes a moment more special than the very truth that it is the only one we have? Better yet, what makes any moment more special than it being a moment I could share with her, the way she moves, her form defying description, her voice angelic, yes angelic, her eyes pure and real, and her love for me true, in rapture, in union, in life, love and death?

Yes, so I lifted my cup, as she lifted hers in unison, and I gazed into her eyes, and she gazed into my eyes, and lost in this moment, I took a sip of tea, and she took a sip of tea.

Everything Stays

The crimson glow of a day waiting to end, glazed with the soft, dissolving clouds taking on shapes that match the whims of one's mind - it was this view that this evening afforded me, as I stared pensively beyond the attic window. My eyes were beheld of this sight - realistically, it was stunning and almost impossible to ignore, its warming rays bleeding gently, yet boldly through the glass, bringing life from outside into every inch of the room - and still, my mind was unable to attend to the scene. It was far too preoccupied with the weary, creaky frame of the attic's lone chair, and the almost unbearable weight of what lay unassumingly in my palm.

Cold was that which I held. Cold, smooth, with but one fragment of something yet colder, yet smoother, but sharp too. It was a symbol of sorts, one emblematic of my Songbird and I. A vow of our union, in love, life and death. A physical manifestation of all that we had been, were and were yet to become. The control this symbol had over my life, over our life, was beyond compare – it was as if the very sentiment of relinquishing to my love this symbol had the power to direct and change our lives forever. Perhaps physically, this is not so – yet emotionally, spiritually, and in every other tangible way, this was a truth that could not be denied.

The figuration remained firm in my grasp. In this room, clenching it in my hands, there seemed to be no noise, save the trickling of the sun's rays still bleeding, giving its life in these, its last moments before the night. The shimmering beams resonate, as if with melody; giving its last to selflessly hold my hands in its path, as if aware of how they shook, singing “calm, calm, slow, slow, listen...”. Otherwise, there was silence from this mostly empty space. Every now and then, the weak frame of the chair might grind at the shifting of my weight. There too may have been the clock, ticking timelessly away; beyond this however, in the realm of reality, it felt silent. But in my mind, such was not the case. In my mind, the noise was endless, the thoughts rapid and unforgiving, the sentiments deep, cold, sharp and heavy - it was this way for her, my Songbird.

I had known for a while now that she was the one. To speak truthfully, I had wished to make this sentiment a reality from the moment I saw her, but truly being hers, and her mine, had made this desire unshakable. Such a strong desire made me weak - I had never known the way the stomach could contort, twist and wrap itself to the point of almost bursting at the mere presence of another...

Was I worthy to feel such?

This - the origin of this moment, and these thoughts, was bound to this sentiment. I did not know if making her mine was against some holy will, some intangible force. I did not know if a moments confession might be wrong - a word, I cannot place it now but at this thought a word feels as if trying to preach, to pry, to invade the very core of my being, but it does not make itself known - that even entertaining the notion of an angel like Her and a man like I being bound was sinful. Since the day she entered my life, I had felt uniquely blessed, and with every note my Songbird would hum with that real, angelic voice, it felt that blessing had been granted anew - did I deserve this?

I had found myself in the attic, staring aimlessly beyond the window simply searching for my voice, that I might find the courage to present the symbol - whose weight at this point had my hands trembling, yet the fear of tarnishing its beauty bade me not let go - to my Songbird. But all the noise had corrupted my mind, these fears that dance to a tune that isn't hers, trying to preach and pry, it made it all just so hard, to find those perfect words...

The words didn't come. No words came in fact - not from my lips. They did not get a chance to. It was instead a melody, that real, angelic voice calling those two most familiar words that had permeated this moment, and silenced my own voice, my own thinking.

"My love?"

I lingered on her call, just for a moment. Within this moment was peace, one conjured in spite of the chaos that had been my own thinking. In its place, I was left bereft at the visage of Songbird. In my heart and in my hands, I felt my love for her welling up at even the mental image of her, and I became lost in the sight of her, lost in the way she moves for just this delicate moment. I see her dancing now, those hips swaying soft yet sharp, quick yet defined.

With just that voice, that real voice, the need for words and thoughts and worries seemed to fade. That sickly tune borne of the corruption in my mind vanished, that of Songbirds now taking its place. Though nothing more than a rat compared to her presence, my love for her was true - did that not prove me worthy enough for even the *opportunity* to ask for her hand?

As if flowing from heart to hand, and hand to ring, what had once been an inconceivable weight now seemed to effortlessly float, just above the skin of my palms; as if forged by this moment, its cold, sharp edges shone now more brilliant and refined than ever, its points honed enough that it could pierce, yet characterised by a delicacy denouncing as much. This moment had given rise to a confidence, a preparedness so sudden yet steadfast, as if demanding I pay heed to the call - for if not in this one, I may never have a chance to seize this *new* moment. And so, clenching the symbol, I decided to seize the moment.

I stood. I would not let my Songbirds call go unanswered any longer. I looked straight ahead... no, I looked at my hands. I looked *into* my hands, as if through them and directly at the outpouring of love overflowing from our symbol, a passion born of her voice, her real voice. I would not let this love go unanswered. I took a step, moving away now from the attic window that had hereto heard me talking to myself - or was I just thinking? In this new moment, I felt its lifeblood dwindle, the setting sun fading now, leaving the clouds without shine or shimmer, and I felt lucky now for that moment it afforded me to bathe in its glory, such this *this* present moment could exist now - and I would not let this moment go unseized.

I stepped, and stepped, and continued to step, as if dancing to the tune of Songbirds call - even after it had since faded. Descending the steps left me in the main hall, and not a moment later had my waltz brought me to the dining room.

I saw my Songbird, her visage as if beaming at the sight of my dance, having acquired a seat for herself at our dining table. The table stood resolute, with an absolute determination to uphold

all that we might ask it to. True enough, many mornings, afternoons and nights it held our plates, glasses, teacups and meals, but this was not special. What was special were the *moments* it held. At times, it held *us*, it held me, held her; it held us as we might cry, or laugh, or become lost in her eyes, pure and guileless; it held us when we refuted tradition and leapt upon its form, and together would dance, lost in the moment. In other times, it held the *weight of us*, the facets of our lives, many trinkets and sentimental goods we had dawned to reveal to each other perhaps... But this day, it would hold a weight unlike anything it had withstood prior - for it would hold *everything* it had once held, condensed into one symbol, one *new* moment. It seemed to understand this, the table, and as I slowly, deliberately yielded myself to a seat opposite my love, I placed my hands, cupping weight of the symbol, onto the table – and as if its resolve never truer, the table held it for me.

I almost refused to look Songbird in her eyes for these moments. So too did I almost not hear her utter again, curious, perhaps worried? yes worried - she uttered “my love?” in her worried, songbird tones. It was not out of fear that I refuted her gaze here, no. It was a selfish desire, a delicate want that fueled this moment - truth be told, I needed one final push before I could start this new moment, and that was exactly what she gave me, singing again the words to her Songbird tune.

Moment...

I look at her, and she looks at me. She has before her two saucer and cups - they are the wrong ones, their forms plain and bare for me to see. I beckon to her our intricate cups, colorful and whimsical and special to the very core of their being and she, without lingering or questioning, replaces what we had with these, for she knows that no explanation is needed for a moment to be special. And then, I open my hands. A part of me shudders. I look her in the eyes, and she looks in mine, and in hers I see the reflection of mine, and in mine I see it. A quiet salvation. Revealed is the ring, the one that commands our future now.

I ask for her hand, and I do so knowing that at no moment will *this* moment be stopped. I look her in the eyes. It all happens slowly. She looks at my hands, and... lingers.

She lingers. I am scared, scared that this moment might stop – but the moment is all we have, at no moment will *this* moment be stopped, it cannot be lost, not like I am lost in her eyes and the way she moves, for what makes a moment more special than the very truth that it is the only one we have?

She looks into my eyes. And her lips curl into those demure dimples, reaching her nightingale earrings which jingle as she simply nods. And a part of me rejoices in the moment.

She is *my* Songbird. She is *my* want. She is *my*...

But a part of me stays scared. Sheathed, hiding its fear, remaining outside of the moment. A word sits at the tip of my tongue. A notion, as if one long forgotten, tries to preach, tries to pry, tries to invade the very core of my being, and yet it is not one I can place nor fathom. Something

lingers... beyond the wonder of this moment, our moment, something from within lies dormant, waiting to turn me inside out, upside down, biding its time, as if saying "I can be patient."

But it is gone - such fear fails to command my attention, not in the presence of my love, my songbird, as I find myself yet again lost in her eyes, lost in the way she moves...

So Much Better

I am awake. I should not be, having retired myself to the night, enveloping myself in the warm veil afforded by the duvets, my body comfortably suppressed by its grounding, reaffirming weight. The curtains drawn allow but fragments of moonlight to shimmer into this space and meet the lids of my eyes - enough to almost hypnotise, calmly sedate the mind and heart and soul. The absolute serenity established by this space is one meant to be surreal, a physical home to tether the body to, as the mind is able to dream freely. And the presence of another body, one which I am tied to in love, to death, to life, should bring peace, our two bodies affording themselves the opportunity for complete vulnerability in these moments of the night.

These are the perfect conditions for rest, the perfect stimuli to bring clarity and sincerity, and yet I am awake. I should not be.

I am awake, and I am paralysed by this moment, this endless moment. I am afraid at this moment, crippled by a looming danger. I can hear it all, see it all, FEEL it all, every sight, every sound. It is an implacable, yet unshakable fear, one that causes every sensation around to betray me. The light of the moon catches me just right, and my eyes, desperately wishing to be sealed but unable to maintain such, are blinded, my pupils turning white. I find myself silently gasping for air, the authority of the covers suffocating me, morphing and wrapping around every inch of my body, begging me to twist and writhe and twitch - but I cannot, the muscles ache and wish, but cannot, twitch. The mind bends and cannot rest, and I fear that this is the end, my end, the end of *my moment* - only if I wake Her.

And so, I lay here. I lay here, and She lays here, and within this moment, this endless moment a thought occurs to me, a word that sits on the tip of my tongue, as if trying to preach, pry, breach my very being in this moment - certainly, a part of me knows this feeling, this word, but I cannot say for sure, as it refuses to leave my lips. Nonetheless, the thought occurs, and with it the cursed notion that this fear is a product of *Her*. The thought brings with it no reasoning, no length to which the notion could be such - there is not a semblance of reality anchoring that thought... and yet, it is pervasive. I cannot discard it - it maintains itself somehow, and in this moment, all I can do is loathe and question it. Is this not my perfect moment? Is she not perfect, are we not perfect? We must be, for she is perfect, she who is holier, more pure and innocent, that guileless smile, the way I am lost in her presence... but the thought lingers. It lingers, and it permeates this moment endlessly, is she not perfect? Surely she must be, surely she must be... but in this moment, I am denied the belief of this. In this moment, she is not Her, not pure, not innocent.

I hear the beating of my heart, and the beating of hers - they do not align, for mine races at a speed I can't trace, as if my heart were trying to burst out from my chest, *thu-thump th-thump th-thump th-thump* - but hers is slow. Deathly slow, and heavy. *Thump. Thump-thump-thump. Thump-thump-thump.* Each beat, *Thump*, another strike of the drum, *Thump*, another crash of the storm, *Thump*. I hear it, as loud as if it were beating in my own throat! Within each of hers, I can only imagine fit a dozen of mine, this heart I have beating at the whims of a mind

entrenched in fear, as if forced to dance helplessly to a corrupt tune. What is this feeling? A word sits at the tip of my tongue, the edge of my mind - I think a part of me knows it, but I cannot say, for it refuses to leave my lips.

She curls against me now. Her arms coil themselves around my chest, cold, blisteringly cold, as if each finger a tooth, with which she bites into my flesh. Their long, slender forms seem to sprawl, occasionally shifting, gliding across my chest, commanding this cold air into every pore of my being. And it spreads, from her hands to my chest, my chest to my body and my blood and my heart and my soul. I can't bring myself to turn away and move to my own side, lest the daggers dug deep in my flesh rip away my mortal form. Even still, I am yet denied the chance to find comfort in these frozen shackles, for as quickly as her skin chills mine, her breath thaws it; the air she breathes cannot be of the same realm as my own, this hellish hot burst caressing my nape every other moment. It burns with a feverish heat that no flame produced could ever conceive, like a thousand, a million lashes to every inch of my neck. And like a virus it spreads, from her breath to my neck, my neck to my body and my blood and my heart and my soul, eating away at everything within me. I am stuck here, privy to the whims of that form of hers, as I freeze and thaw, moment to stop, she a monster and I her prize, moment, stop.

Trapped as I am, the questions persist - why am I lost here, lost in this moment? You could say to me that within this moment passed a million years, that in the time I spent bound to this instant eternity of damnation, the entire world around me had lived on, that people lived, and died, and were born, and lived, and died - where did I get lost? Where did I go wrong? Surely, a part of me knows, but I cannot say, for the word will not leave my lips.

I continue to explore my sin - yes, it must be my sin, for She who is holier, Her the very depiction of angelic, it must be some sin I have committed against her that I should be devoid of what should be her purity in these moments, *my moment*. Perhaps my hands, blood soaked as they are, have finally bled again, tarnishing Her, bringing her down to the decrepit depths of the crypts I swore to keep her from - is that my sin? And if so, would another in my position have committed the same sin? Am I found just another rat, dancing to, clinging to, attempting to actualise my want, selfish and delicate, in defiance of the world? Perhaps it is that she could never love a filthy rat like I, that this was simply an act of pity - who could love someone like I, surely not *Her!* Forgive me my sin, that I believed my blood-soaked hands were ever fit for you! I should never commit such sin again, I shall let you dance again, watch as the rapture begins and leaves me aside, so long as I can see you dance again, your guileless eyes, your arms commanding air, your dimpled smile, your nightingale earrings, your voice so pure and real...

Her voice. The once dulcet tones of Hers ring my ears now - how can it be? Does She sing in her sleep, or do I simply find myself succumbing to my own madness? And I say 'once,' for the song takes on a new quality now, almost in tune with the beating of my heart, still untraceable. Surely a part of me knows it, but I cannot say, for the word will not leave my lips. Nonetheless, this corrupt song I hear brings with it a kind of vision, one I can see with my eyes wide open - the world around me in the present is as intangible to me as in any dream I might concoct - it brings a vision of Her.

I see it again now, the way she moves, this way that she simply is...

...I exist here, lost. Lost in this moment. Lost in the way she moves, her arms frantically slicing the air as if attempting to rend the space around her; her body, convulsing rapidly, with no remorse for the will of the sounds around or inside her; her eyes, pricked of any purity, instead hollow and lifeless, an apathy borne of the soul inside being severed from the body by reaching, grabbing, bloodied hands of the tomb. And I am lost, lost in this way that she moves. Lost in the way she simply... is....

It cannot be. It *cannot* be. That moment is not one that exists, not one that has, or is, or ever will - She is pure, She is the very depiction of angelic, my songbird, with her chattering songbird tones, her voice, that real voice. THIS is the moment that exists, the one I am lost in, in the way she moves as if commanding the space around her, her body shuffling rhythmically, her soft lips, those guileless eyes, the symbol that we share that entwines us for life, it binds us for she is mine and I hers, THIS is the moment in which I exist, She with I, her real voice, She is my songbird, She is my want, she is my...

My eyes do not close, and yet the world around me shifts. The sounds and sight of dance are lost to me, as I return to the moment, this moment, *my* moment. The moonlight that shimmers through the crack left by the curtain meets my eyes - but I am not soothed. I know for sure that it burns these eyes of mine, relentlessly trying to relieve me of my vision, but in this moment I could not care, for it was not to my sight that I attended.

The sound of her heart and mine, the touch of her fingers against my chest, the sensation of her breath meeting my skin, all remains. To what end, I wish I hadn't known. But I did know. I knew the origin of this, her biting skin, that hellish breath, that moment that has not, does not and can not exist - but has, and does, and can. It was something that had found its way, as if preaching, prying, breaching my very being, and with it came a word that sat patiently on my tongue. Oh, Songbird, you must forgive me - I have lied, and in my heart of hearts, that which beats a million times a minute, I wish I could conceal the truth from myself, and yourself, longer still - this word is not fresh, this notion not new, it has been bound with me since the beginning, one I *knew* would come to be yet refused to let it sway me.

But now, as I feel you, and as I have seen you in that moment, that has, and will, and can exist, I cannot hide it any longer. These hands have stained you, bloodied as they are - perhaps that is why you are unrecognisable to me. Perhaps they have already left their bloody mark on you and for that sin there is nothing save an eternity of damnation that can await me, that I have stolen you from a life you deserved - that for my want, my selfish want, my delicate want, I have sundered Her from the heavens and tarnished you, the very depiction of angelic. Please, body of mine let me move, mouth of mine let me speak, let me sing my regret - let admission to my deeds perhaps at least free you, that I might no longer have to watch as you and I live a life that

should not be, that you might still bring rapture to those few privy souls, those as pure as you that live among these rats like I! Let me not condemn you, let Her not be bound to one as sick and helpless and weak as I, let Her and all Her perfection not be tainted that she might continue to dance, that I might one day become lost again, lost in the way she moves, lost in the the way that she simply-

Moment.

I knew not why, or how, or when it was so - but it ceded. The sound of her heart and mine, the touch of her fingers against my chest, the sensation of her breath meeting my skin were all placated. I feel her soft, loving arms wrapped around my tense chest, her breaths, each as if a part of her being, gracing my skin gently. I felt myself enveloped in the warm veil afforded by the duvets, my body comfortably suppressed by its grounding, reaffirming weight. My muscles no longer twitched, and even the moonlight that would have at once blinded me should I have heeded its presence, seems to have calmed, its dull glow enough to sedate.

I am lost now. Lost in this moment, with Her, my Songbird, perfect as she is, perfect as we are...

But no longer could I hide it. The word that had sat at the tip of my tongue and left my lips. A word I had known all too well, was free. The hands of the holy had spurned in me listlessness, and I, the listless rat, had let my dirty tail and sour teeth ruin that which was perfect - and now, she is not perfect. Now she is far removed from who she used to be, as too am I. Now I am lost, condemned to this notion of my sin of loving where love was not meant, wading through the regret that fills this new moment. Now she is not perfect.

I am awake. I should not be.

Center-

I am free flowing stream of consciousness onto the tape. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] My aim is centered on the mass of all my mistakes, a blood-soiled rat of the filthy depths, until I can drain the final breath of that which weakens me - *me*. Guilty, guilty, my mind screams at me, I am guilty of sin, and it is my repentance of that to which I am drawn to heed... yet, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *I am, patiently complacent*, paralysed by moment, stop, moment, stop... Yes, I am waiting to begin it all, just one more moment [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], oh how [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] do I submit to Her! [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

...

IGNORE EVERYTHING BELOW HERE, for reference only

[This sinking feeling in my stomach has been interrupted, by something faster than the speed of what I can keep up with. The boat is sinking, but I do not dare attempt to rock it. I push a finger to the temple to pull out a meaning - it seems the only answer now is to pull out a miracle. My anti-sanctimony... My heart is flowing with regret.

I am free flowing stream of consciousness onto the tape. My aim is centered on the mass of all my mistakes, 'til I can drain the final breath of the weakest link in me. I'm patiently complacent, waiting to begin it all.

Centerfold, the one you wanted - steady, study, but don't get too close, or you might not want it... what you hoped for, you might not want it.

Wary of word or whisper, bring it all to rest. Pulling the two into the middle 'til they each collapse, you're growing valley rallied to the end of it.

...

My muscle memory now seems to have become corrupted... but now, results speak for themselves - why would I interrupt it? The pain and pressure serves now only to fill up my pocket. And if life can't supply a crisis? I can just keep dreaming.

All my intentions are now written here across the page. The trigger finger itches, waiting for the next embrace to put on the pressure to collapse that which weakens me. And when I cast it out?

The writing is all on the wall - to keep up the pace of my next quiet disgrace, to put me above the rest - and for that, I am blessed.

Centerfold, the one you wanted - steady, study, but don't get too close or you might not want it. What you hoped for, you might not want it.

Waiting for a catalyst to burst a vein in heart or brain - it's all a brawl of brain and brawn to kill my better half. My inclination has me racing - *everything into the pit!*

Better Unsaid

“...my love?”

In this moment, I had sunk into the unending depths born of the armchair. An innocuous piece at a glance, it hides a resignation....

In this seat I had been sunk, almost deafening me to the call of her voice again, “my love?”. It was a call pitchy and distant, incredulous? no, uncertain perhaps. Her voice faded as fast as it arrived, wading through the dense layers of fog that had been invading my vision.

In this moment, I had sunk into the physical comforts afforded me by the armchair. Its seat, once firm and stately, had become a tired, soft and comforting thing. It had gone long unused for a time, but these months had seen it now frequented by the comfort-seeking frames of myself and my love. And it had in this time deflated, not of weakness or defeat, but simply out of age – no longer did it need to keep itself rigid and inscrutable, for it knew that its purpose was being realised. This knowledge was enough for it to lower its guard and allow itself to embrace its future.

Yes, in this seat I had sunken, but only until I heard her voice call again. “My love?” she called, an inquisition propagating – no, inviting - my company. Her voice rang through the hall of our home, singing softly from the dining table to which she had yielded, over to the living room armchair to which I had, yes, sunken. Angelic. That was her voice, angelic, a soft, angelic, chattering songbird - my Songbird. A voice so gentle and supportive, as if always in harmony with whoever she spoke to – even herself. Such a voice could sway any man, woman, person – anyone would be soothed, swayed by her voice. I hadn’t needed this, of course – no, her very presence was enough to convince me. But rest assured, her voice was angelic and pure and real.

I stood, in response to her call. As I did so, the forms of the room around me began to slowly manifest, as if just waking from a dream. The armchair I had found so dearly to my liking these months was not alone, another chair idling next to it whose seat had, too, been supporting me and Songbird for a time now. Between the two, a coffee table rested, small but sizable enough for a couple to leave that which pleases them, a lamp and perhaps his and her teacups. I stepped, manoeuvring myself from the living space I had been resting in, through the hall and towards the kitchen. I didn’t stop, but passing through the hall my eyes fixated for a moment on the walls. Undeniably, they were quite a plain cream colour, unremarkable on their own - but it was for such reasons my eyes *remained* fixated, as upon these walls hung *moments*. Adorning its simple surface, many portraits of my Songbird and I floated weightlessly, those plain walls vanishing behind the frames. My eyes fell upon a moment, a photo of her - her eyes, starry, guileless eyes... I sunk into those eyes whose purity had entranced me so. And I made my way to the dining table, acquiring a seat across from her, my Songbird.

Polarity

Beyond Me

-fold

My intentions are now written here across the page.

[REDACTED] the trigger finger itches, waiting for the next embrace, the moment she deigns to run back into my life, to put on the pressure to collapse that which weakens me - yes, Her. She dared stumble in my direction, and bring ablaze a fruitless want with a false moment? I know I have been, [REDACTED] paralysed by moment, stop, moment, stop... [REDACTED] [REDACTED] - but when I cast it out? When rid of moment, stop, moment, stop, I see it - the writing is all on the wall, [REDACTED] it covers those eyes on the wall, no longer do I wait for them to speak, no longer [REDACTED]! I must continue, quickly, to keep up the pace of my next quiet disgrace, to put *me* above the rest - I have torn her from the skies, and in her wake, a vacancy appears - and for that, I am blessed!

Friends

...and that voice? Nothing more than a facade! I know it not, not as anything angelic, no songbird tones could ever emerge from those razor lips, no it could never be - I bet she could speak with no more or fewer words than a vulture, screaming aimlessly at every sight, every sound, oh what I'd give to tear that devilish tongue straight from that bitches throat, that I may never be condemned to such noise! Free me of the moments, that endless moment that her foul beak would dig and stab and rend my flesh and spill out my guts - claim that song of hers as mine, damn me not to the sound of her devilish voice.

Heavy

Idea for ring to be what he sees, settling his rage - end this chapter with the illusion almost completely dropping, the veil keeping regret out fading and an acceptance that he has lost her - but rather than him accepting that he lost her, express it more as he never had her, as he grabs a coat and goes out to 'hear a song', before rapture waltz starts as the dance from her perspective.

Maybe have him start saying, "it's over now. It's over now, i've let it slip away."

Rapture Waltz