

Breathless

Christian Rinderknecht

rinderknecht@free.fr

October 23, 2022

For the states preceding infancy.
When we were breathless. When
we were without light.

Pascal Quignard, *All the World's
Mornings*

Like a cup of tea
overflowing

she keeps going places
unexpected
beyond will and power

drawing silhouettes
of sweet fragrance
on the white morning

and I can't help but clutch
at the burning tablecloth

again and again

I drape this tainted love
over my broken heart
and I keep going places
unexpected

like a make-believe ghost
haunting every cup of tea
with a trembling face

Without a thought
you hand me a second jar

Without a thought
I open it and you smile
in profile
at this intimacy
like a wife

Hidden in plain sight
I wish we were them

secret delights
that can touch
and be open
without a thought

Late among the guests
shining and laughing
at brilliant jokes

we share one last drink
with two ice cubes

Side by side
complicit and beautiful
reflecting the moonlight

fatal icebergs
always
float in a world of silence

always
shortchange the stars
ninety percent

below the surface

Her dangling arms
abandoned to the wind
like lianas

gently beat to the rhythm
of her footsteps

oblivious to the choir
of the forest around us
whispering

staring
at the divine pendulums

waiting for a sign

as I do

know the wild deer
invisible yet so close

Hear its deep chest
darkly drumming
an untamed song

about you

What a waste
I tell myself

this whole bread
stale
which you forgot
at the back of the cupboard

I remember the loaf
warm and tender
like a promise
of young love

and

— Let's make French toasts!
you say

When you go through my lines
with me

sometimes
I slip in my own words
and you want to slip too

with me

a blank page

Away

birch trees
bathed
in warm sunlight

Close

your white fingers
combing
your golden hair

Blinded

you guide my hands
to the clear waters
of the fountain

Thirsty

from your lips
the gulp
eclipses the sun

You used to hide in my books
like in crannies and nooks

I would find you in Neruda
sieving my favorite pages
for a nugget of my soul

But metaphors whispered
in ways I could not
in ways I dared not

until I found a curl of hair
you left in a margin

Suddenly

a prod to the brass spring
sends my heart palpitating
like a broken watch

Bent over those pages
on the corner of a table
the words fade to white
like a film overexposed
to the halo of your blond hair

only leaving behind
the offbeat heart
of a blind man

Tonight
you open for me
an alchemy book

By the oil lamp
flickering
the mute book speaks
in crucibles and symbols

of wild roses blooming
on a lover's grave

of a split pomegranate
under two half moons

of bellows sighing
over furnace anew

of the mystical kiss
of water and fire

of the geography
of beauty spots

a secret zodiac for all senses
on your body of soft amber
where I die and am reborn

Do you remember
how we used to play
winter in summer?

You'd furrow my hair
with the tip of your tongue
and the field would shiver
under the plough

I'd sit behind you
and embrace you like a coat
my breath sending a frisson
down your spine

I'd pretend to sled
my hands on your waist
and your nervous laughter
would melt my heart

As exhausted as the day
you'd fall back on me
and our breaths like geysers
would ascend into the starry night

slowly spinning
around our cold noses
against each other
in the equator of my arms
around you

Once
through a window
of the log cabin
at dawn

we caught
the shivering world
transfixed
watching its reflection
in the dew

In a blink
the round mirrors
of iridescent water
had formed
a boundless kaleidoscope
and showed each other

your dreamy eyes
in vision wide

and wondered

Already the avid hour
swallows
the shores of the world

Towards the horizon
shadows pursue whispers
lost amongst the graves
along the walls

From his skull
the poet sees everywhere
ink flooding in

Yet you arise
in the still second
illuminating the doorway
of the vault

your bright face
smiling down on me
simple and elegant
like a blade

In a sarabande
you seem to say
come outside
in the fields of blue

and let your heart
slowly beat the drum
of another day

let this long night
surprise you
with a blue moon

The dying day shrinks
between the clouds
and the rain starts drawing
mirrors in the mud

until darkness drowns
the match of eloquence
and needles start piercing
the firmament
in suns uncountable

They blink leagues away
like you used to

when you stretched over me
like a constellation
and kissed me distantly

Now on my knees
my lips still reach for the stars
but the gulp is dirty water

Quietly set against the light
you are perfectly framed

I don't care what they think
about the optics of love
about the perfect shot
at wild happiness

Like a forest
leaning against the twilight

you harbor within yourself
multitudes
that murmur darkly like one
and suddenly go silent
whenever someone laughs

Slowly I dare a hand
to your black hair
shadow amongst shadows

But you are startled by my eyes
like those of a silent film actor
in a close-up

Caught in my headlights
this magnificent soul of yours
hesitates before flitting away

leaving me in awe

pupils dilated
quietly peering into your night

In my brimming eyes

the hinterland
suddenly
met a rising tide

a painting by Turner

of ripped curtains of mist
behind an old boat
tugged to her last berth
to be broken up

where flowing waters wash

beams and lashes across

your overcast eyelines

wrecked by promises
lying eerily at the bottom
of your Black Sea

magnificent and haunting

you follow again the wind
moaning in faraway sails

In your secret garden
when the early light
accounts for the world
you prune the rosebushes

like the many queer lives
within you that ask
something always refused

You keep saying to them

*If I listened to you
we would grow wild
and who would love us then
You can only feel and I see
Go to your places and sleep*

But sometimes
a whisper quivers
and blooms under the sun

transfiguring you
and making you divine
in spite of yourself

before flitting away
like a dream cut short

Will you ever be
like that always
for any one being?

I raise my banner like a sail

catching oblique sunbeams
from the fleeing horizon
on the seas
above the firmament

and I set the course

for your heart overturned
like an inkwell on a letter

to you

for I smuggle jewels
from the celestial orbs

under the cover of night

I will show you
how quaint and eccentric
my buried treasure is

like a comet

who always feels the pull
to your circular orbit

*from an archipelago
of solitude*

because the island
comes to the shipwrecked

Under a coat of ermine
dreams offer the skies
echos scattered away

on the white page

the inkwell overturns
like the horizon

Under shroud and vermin
the yearning soul cries
echos scattered away

on the snow field

darkness many returns
flood the horizon

Those clear eyes

clearer yet this morning
to have loved another

A clearer sky

whose rising sun
left two blue puddles
where you search for me
amid the dew

Hope is the aster
in the eastern plain
of weeds and flower
from last night's rain

Blue is the flower
under sky unborn
like secret Easter
too bright to be borne

Northern breeze whispers
to the sapphire
worships of vespers
and hearths with fire

but wind's promises
blow the candlelight
and its soft kisses
will bid you goodnight

Oh picking you up
to my bleeding heart!
Oh drink from my cup
in my life take part!

No more rolling dice
your petals like lips
will touch Paradise
where love never sleeps

Sleds rush down a hill —
each bump threading a note
to the braids of their life lines
to the necklaces of their laughter

Like them
I draw on immaculate pages
invisible parallels
that conjure up your silhouette

Hide and seek in the mist —
your white hands over my eyes
your panting for breath
sends a long shiver down
blending with that of winter

I caress the blank pages
of a book open to the invisible
invoking your pale body
under my fingers

trembling on soft hills

my breath is taken away
at each descent
so impatient at each ascent!

Exhausted —
lying on the snow
we watch passing clouds
and I quench my thirst
in the calm stream
of your words
before oblivion

Only remain these verses
in Braille
where I feel your steps
towards the white paradise

In this waltz
of oblivion and regrets

I step forwards
and I forget
all the lessons
I swore to remember

You step backwards
and you regret
learning so much
about me

Come

The third beat
is not here yet
We don't have to repeat
the same missteps

against each other

let us stand still
like that afternoon
in the pouring rain
when I warmed you
in my arms

Cheerfully
you guide me through
your physics book

on magnetism
between opposites

on forward
and reverse phases

on tension
and discharge

Finally
I listen to you
only with gravity

weak

within arm's reach

Across the dinner table
a basin of apples
where you used to sit

classically framed
with the soft tones
of your cheeks

full and ripe
from your quiet smile
where I used to
to sink my teeth

Is this still life
still a life?