

One Winter in Genova, I Was Somebody Else

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Oh, to idly smoke again! To pay no heed to age or risk
and stifled lungs, to the surreptitious shaving off of days.
But the truth, when it hits is so unchic. Even though I long
to feel European-sleek again, like Kate Moss in 90s Versace
or Monica Vitti in tortoiseshell shades; to return
to when I'd court the hours like zealous suitors,
wrapped in the Ligurian dusk—

well, that girl is gone.

From a mezzanine high above Via Roma, cigarette in hand,
I'd watch the women in mink hats and muffs stroll,
miniature dogs tucked underarm. I bought Alaïa wedges
from the vintage boutique; black velvet with a cliff-face heel,
straps which climbed my calves like blackened ivy,
but mostly my scuffed leather boots sufficed for the places I went—
like Maddalena, where I met you. When a local salon cut me a fringe
I said nothing, though it didn't suit—thought incognito best
for this brand-new shameless guise. It never made sense to me—
the plot twist—but regardless, after we kissed, I couldn't get
the chalk taste of you out of my mouth. Nothing on Earth
had ever scared me more than what I was about to do.

A salt-wash of wounds—

a blood-let under blood moon.

Now, I have forgotten the date they built the Sottoripa,
and when the sea still lapped the colonnaded quays.
I guess we never see the details at first. The flaked orange rust
on the balustrade, which stained my hands. The iron key,
hanging slant on a broken hook. The ravens plunging for bread
in the fountain on the night I got locked out.

Things like that had never happened to me before.

What is Italian for *magnitude*? I was always looking up
the damn phrases you used—*Sentiamo come te la cavi adesso*—

Too bad! You'd say, *it's slang, of course.* I never worked out
what you meant. I haven't yet.

But with a stitch from climbing the marble stairs and a fever of sorts,
I waited for you to ride the death-trap elevator. And later,
when you slammed the kitchen door the glass pane cleft
scattering barbed slivers like a mean February frost.

I liked that you didn't smoke, but you never minded when I did.

You joined me on the terrace only once. A galvanic charge
as lightning hit the flagpole on the roof and lit up the port.

Remember the calm before you brought me shaking
into bright white plumes.