

# WHERE I WENT WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING

*a letter  
in sonnets  
by  
Esther A.  
Caron*



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## **A SWOLLEN ACHE**

fills the back of my throat, a hurt the shape  
and texture of a peach pit. Something should fill that space  
that does not; my body quietly notes its absence.  
I have known this glandular hunger long enough  
that I look forward to meeting it here, on these occasions,  
when you prepare a late meal, we rut, we sleep, I leave.  
Fourteen revolutions of the hall clock. It feels too much  
a private ache to spend time thinking about it while you  
busy yourself cooking. The coarse red wine you selected  
has burned through my nostrils, past the empty space,  
heats my chest, warming me to the idea of distance between  
us. I walk into the study to look again at your books, seeking  
wisdom by association, examining inscriptions, marginalia,  
ginger-dusted jackets. Run my fingers along their spines.

## **YOU STUDIED THESE**

when I was a child. While I studied  
the alphabet, you studied Aristotle and Attar. I lay on the bed  
where your sister sleeps when she visits you. I am in my mind

distant until you come in and wring your hands together,  
ask if you can get me another drink.

Following you I slide from the room, shimmying  
myself onto the counter next to you where you work.

I allow you to pull me nearer you, your fingers  
secreting between my skin and waistband.

I accept the shot of tequila, a lash  
of salt off your hand, sip the glass  
of water you offer, receive a cup of wine.

Part my lips to accept a bite of shrimp,

It is blatant and boyish in its suggestion. A sting of lime

## **PRICKLES IN THE CORNERS**

of my mouth. At nine forty-five  
my jeans are loose and you tell me dinner is ready.

We sit across from one another at the table,  
the distance between us a show for an absent audience:

I have been so close to you before this that I have lost myself.

We eat, rice and tortillas, giant prawns with lime  
and chili and flaked salt and cumin, fat slices

of soft avocado relenting to the acid of it all.

I wonder aloud: What is the best part?

Your music, compact discs from the 90s?

The lust I see in you, exactly the way people would expect it?

I think to myself that it is the way I pass through the gate  
and upstairs in a way foreign to my former self. We both enjoy  
my beautiful feet and broad shoulders, big hair, uneven hips.

## **I AM SUBTLE AS**

an elephant in Indiana but here, here  
I am soft and crushable. It is hard to feign distance,  
to manufacture politeness when we are alone,  
when I have felt your hands under the table, children  
running amok, away from their mother. Felt you reach  
for something I hadn't realized I would have to give up.  
Hard to pretend I have not felt your eyes appraise  
the lengths of silk inside me. Assessing color, and  
quality, imagining garments for the making as I  
unravel. When you finally place your napkin down  
beside your plate peppered with chili oil, and reach

and pluck the fork from my hand, my belly swells  
to accommodate my regret. I hear my sigh. Please,  
leave the dishes unwashed. Meet me on all fours

## LIKE WE INTENDED

in your bedroom, watched by  
mismatched furnishings and neat stacks of old t-shirts,  
by your last love's half-empty pot of night cream,  
by the face of your broken watch on the nightstand.  
Meet me in the dark where we can pretend we know each other.  
Later, we can pretend we do not. I can wake at five am  
when light ekes out the strength to push through the blinds,  
and you curl into the nook just above my sacrum.  
At this early hour, I can turn over and run my finger  
along the scar on your belly, pretend I have not felt it before,  
ask again how you got it, before I swing my legs out  
and away from you, and pad out to the toilet, and  
relieve myself, washing you away; go to the kitchen,  
pour coffee, wash my dish, place it in the rack.

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