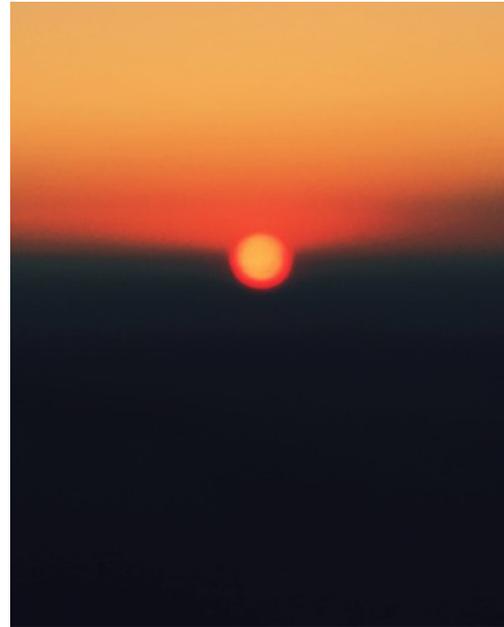


His Ballard, under *waning* Moons.

Prologue

—

*When our personalities collided
we took time apart to forget.
Questions of separate lived realities
constantly spun around us like orbiting
moons, until both our real and imagined
lives carefully rolled away from each
other. Like glass pebbles drifting softly
towards the great wide open blue.*



Chapter I
Relive & Relieve.



more literal



Shimmer

Through clarity we were closer.
Then it ended.

I let myself out.
Pushed past the shadow
that lingered darkly
against the open door.

Under a sober moon,
once finished, all signs lead to it.
One everlasting moment.

Our last moon changed its gaze.

Its light shone down a knowing phase
and lit up both our bodies,
like mother moon
waned on beds of light.

Cool evenings spent by seas,
against waves as cold
as you could be.

I practiced silence and loud certainty.
Not as innocent as I could be.
You shook me out of my polite
and then you *shimmered* out of sight.

I

That night it poured, and has since soaked every pore of my memory with the strange and intoxicating smell of stale sweat and damp. The journey through London felt long and bright, our bodies held down by the weight of our soaking wet clothes. Two men, also drenched and waiting on the platform, followed us onto the carriage we'd boarded on our way home back to His flat. One of them, who'd sat opposite me, kept staring intently in my direction as I drip dried, now warm and sodden, and wrapped uncomfortably in humid air. "Typical", He muttered, quietly and under his breath. Nuzzling in deeply between my shoulder and neck, He shot back a smugness on his face towards the man sat opposite. A look that I would later recognise directed back at me.

II

We'd spent the evening driving around farms trying to find somewhere to park with no light pollution. I wasn't prepared to drive out too far of the city and so we found ourselves crashing about in the dark, anxious and confused as to what the hell we were doing there. As we slowly made our way towards a fence that lined the edge of a field to our left, our car alerted a flock of white sheep that shifted themselves away from us up towards the hill, just out of reach of the car's headlights. As I edged forward slowly to mark out where the shape of the fence began, the sheep suddenly, rather than continuing up the rise, all turned and stared directly in our direction.

Their eyes, now full and gleaming, and reflecting back the light of the full beam, stared down at us and shone like a silent choir of spotlights. They stood still and stoic, as did we, and in that moment it was as if we were all staring into an infinite void of mirrors reflecting back at us our mistake. It was then that I saw a pair of headlights moving slowly down the path some way behind us, seemingly intent on following our path. "We're gonna get shot!" He cried, and so out of my heightened paranoia I tried to reverse into the field of cabbages that sandwiched our path between it like a limp piece of salad. It didn't work, and without thinking I instead drove on past the cabbages, past the sheep and past the fence, dropped the full-beam and headed straight for the farm house in the distance. Drenched in silence and apparent lack of life.



I

The rain picked up then.

Thunder rolled and ricochet'd around us both like large, metal rubbish bins as we ran from the station down the flooded, street-lit alleyway. Shocks of amber and shades of red light bounced off the pools of water that rested in the dented pavement beneath our feet. The tar swollen and broken over years of use. We moved quickly up the iron staircase to the front door, and again up another flight of stairs to his room. Here again, I thought. This was *not* what I expected.

III

When I first met Him I had been warned.

I was told of His strange behaviour: his narcissism, his egotism and overwhelming sense of self-worth. In short I was convinced he was a psychopath before I even met Him. And then I met Him, and I was convinced He was a psychopath. The third time we met I found Him curious, completely absorbing, and had forgotten all about him being a psychopath. I'd read Jon Ronson's book after all, and was clearly an expert. But perhaps, I thought, he was sociopath. Swings and roundabouts.. It was a word he was aware of but not something he openly related to. That was until, however, several months down the line (whether or not out of humour or seriousness I couldn't tell), after he moved from London to the seaside town down south. We were walking down the tree lined street on which I lived, in the peak of summer, down towards the sea. I don't remember another part of that conversation, except for that which I obsessed over. The idea that he related to such a word and seemed to wait for my own confirmation, or contradiction — to which I gave neither a response. Perhaps out of my own fear of feeling, at the very least, the vagueness of its truth.

The months that continued long on through summer, through autumn and early winter, I experienced the strangest, most inconsistent and passionate moments of my life. He had convinced me, in not so many words, that though His presentation to the world was that of a completely self-realised confidence that radiated out of Him — consuming Him in everything He did and said — that He did however somehow *rely* on me. When I would leave there would always be a piece of jewellery, or clothing of mine that He would want to keep, or 'borrow'. When He visited, He would always wear my clothes. To some extent I recognised His search for an identity to which I appeared confident in, and that it was *that* that He found attractive. But whether or not this fascination and attraction went further beyond my second skin..

I guess I'll never know.

1011

00:27

HIM & HE drive around his street looking for a parking space. Usually there is one, but at almost half past midnight there are no spaces to find now that everyone is home after work.

HIM: "You can't come in"

HE: "That's fine.. I hadn't planned on it."

HIM: "I'm too tired and I need to sleep"

HE: "Like I said, that's fine"

HE parks just outside HIS house on double yellow lines.

HIM: ".. do you want to come in for a bit?"

HE: "I've just parked on double yellows, I can't leave it here on the bend"

HIM: "Well you can't stay anyway, I need to sleep. Just come in for a bit, it'll be fine"

HE: "Okay, fine. Why not."

19:17

HIM & HE chat online. It's the day before he leaves for London again. HIM has lived here for four months now.

HIM: "Tomorrow is my last night"

HE: "What are you doing tomorrow eve, after the show?"

HIM: "Not sure yet. One of those things."

HE: "Ok. Maybe let me know if you want to go for drinks after. If you're not busy, I mean. But I'll understand if you are."

HIM: "Ok."

HE: "It's weird that I'll be saying goodbye to you tomorrow. Anyway.."

HIM: "Goodbye."

HE: "Well..."

HIM: "Z lives in London. And I used to live there."

HE: "Since when?"

HIM: "Oh I thought they did."

HE: "Z's in Paris."

HIM: "Oh."

HE: "They'll be back in London soon, and yeah, I know. I'm just getting sentimental..."

II

Pulling in to the expansive, paved pathway that surrounded the old farmhouse, I found myself consumed with an unrelenting gust of guilt that ripped through my body like a sheet of velvet. This was someone's home that I'd idly driven into in the middle of the night. He sat there nervously giggling, as did I (though I felt for differing reasons), and we decided enough was enough. Stargazing wouldn't happen here, and so we turned and drove back along the narrow path, past the sheep and cabbages; the mysterious second pair of headlights vanishing into the cold like a ghostly apparition.

Stopping eventually in a lay-by on our way home, we watched the city and surrounding villages and towns as they flickered like theatre lights against a midnight blue curtain. Their luminance highlighting the horizon as if it were drawn by a soft, watercolour pencil.

Then it was time to call it a night.

Gathering ourselves up, we got back into the car and drove gently back to town. The farmhouse melting slowly out of view, into the dark.

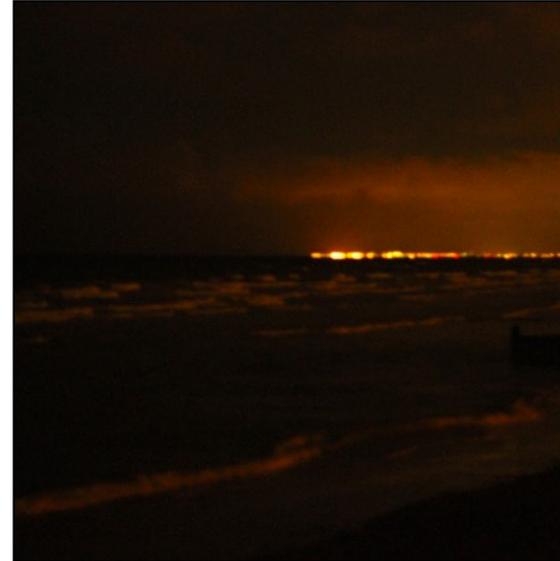
I

The room was small to medium sized. The standard blueprint of student accommodation that both lacked and reeked of sparse familiarity. He reached down and switched on a table lamp, its light rushing forth to fill the room as if it were the final chance to prove itself. Pops of amber burst from bowls of metal, highlighting its geometry. Expensive speakers bordered and framed the computer monitor like quotation marks. In the morning He would take them down and hug them like uncomfortable children. Blaring song beat after beat; the subwoofer reverberating through His chest like a twin heart.

The bed, broken some time before, lay slanted on its right side against the wall. Its broken slats "held up" by empty cardboard boxes that offered no physical support whatsoever. Luckily for me He took the slant, offering me a good nights sleep. That was, at least, after we'd rolled about for a bit.

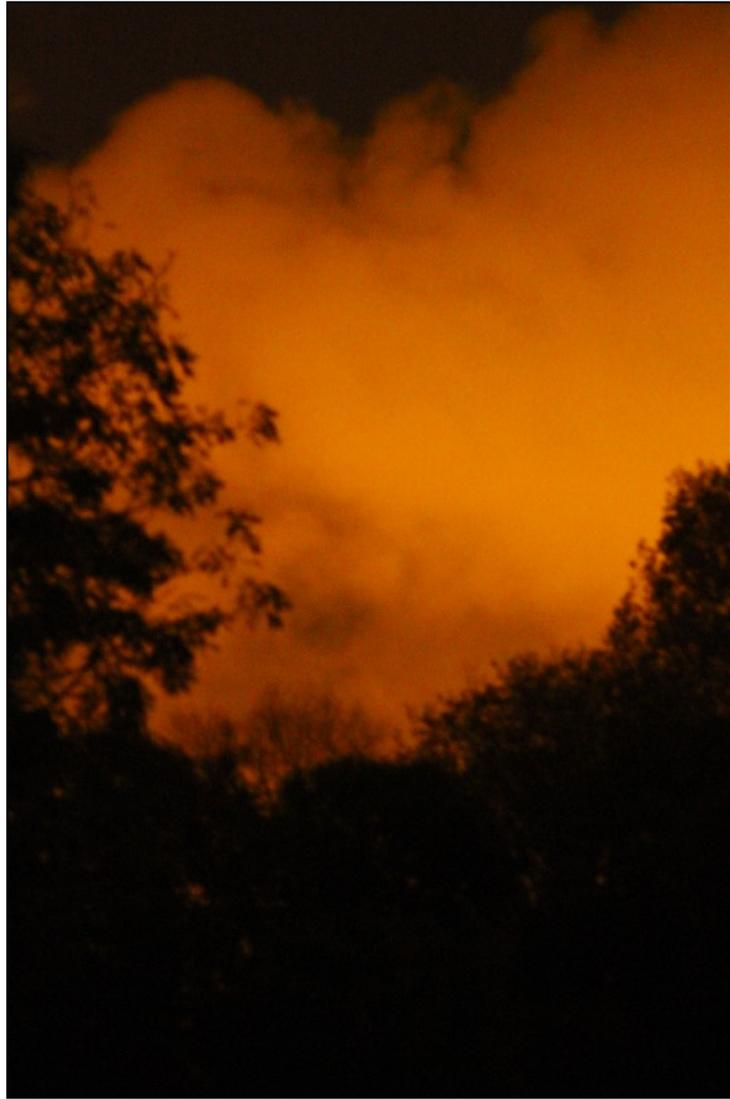
A shriek of lightning shot itself across the sky as I made my way towards Him. Thunder blasted. Rain crashed against the glass, charging through the open window. The wooden pane aching under the pressure of its swollen weight.

He turned his head slowly towards mine. And under the first moon of mid-summer we surveyed the hills and plains of our geography.



☾

I now sit snugly by the sea, counting waves as they wash over me. Laid in beaches
by the pier watching seagulls as they near towards the shore, they bathe their feet,
I sigh and think of home, the wheat, that floats and ripples through the air — just
like the wind *now* through my hair.



Chapter II
Imagine



God I wish I wasn't so insecure that I will accept this mind-fuck of a relationship over nothing. I wish I didn't care for someone who hardly cares for themselves.

I wish I could save that moment when the endorphins release the upmost, loving part of you. I want to bottle that up and drink it whenever I'm forced to pretend you're actually interested in anyone but yourself.

HIM looks up from his phone, turns it off and apologises to HE. Inside, HIM says he wants to change. Inside, HE doesn't know what else to say.

In the end nothing changes. They eat till fade to black.

IoII

19:57

An imagined monologue.

HIM & HE sit across from each other at a table in a dimly lit living room. It's mid-August and the seagulls have settled for the night. The left sash window lies half open, sending in a potent, warm, salt-air breeze. HE puts a heavy and large, circular, burnt red roasting pot down in the centre of the round table — its inside filled with a carpet of filo pastry — and sits down opposite HIM, who types absent-mindedly on their phone. Earlier HE had seen HIM messaging a boy he'd slept with a few nights ago, who happened to live just around the corner from HE's flat. This coincidence didn't sit right, and while HE knew it wasn't done on purpose, it still felt a little too close to home.

HE: Tell me, do I seriously need to tell you how rude it is for you to be texting boys you've fucked while I'm serving you your dinner?

Are you that absent minded to think that that's normal? Or are you really just that much of a manipulative bastard?

Sometimes I feel like I've been some kind of gateway drug, and that you're some kind of addict that checks in with their source now and again.

Chapter III
Photographic Memory



more lateral

You sculpt —
and organise your sound.

I sit and dream and lie in heather
while you lay breathless pooled in leather.

May *God* bless our unforgiving rupture
of which He offers no reprieve.

Save from our burning ornamental structure.
That make us want nothing more than leave.

Like straw in summer
I now lay beaten on the ground.

Photographs are funny things they both lie and tell the truth depending on
which end you sit around the table and at which length of its perimeters
follow you as if it were a needy cat yes one that shakes its bell and orders you to
play

photographs are funny things I was taught as an historian to focus plainly on the
facts *that* that we cannot know or know and those which hide in plain
of sight — their presence seemingly a fact though facts can dart around the room
like charged electrons superseding one and other depending on their cause
and/or effect

so how may we know what counts as that which counts as fact apart
from that which follow you as if it were a needy cat yes one that shakes its bell
and orders you to play

facts are facts at least that what we're told are facts but what
makes a fact a fact apart from that which makes factuality an act of truth and/or a
time and place that separates a space and screams its exceptionality a truth, yes
one that shakes its bell and orders you to play

both truth and paintings born of light can bring us joy considered trite but
don't dismiss the pointed hill or jagged summit twist
lit by the risen waning moon
called 'the opposite of bliss'.



when ends are all that lie in open seas
and ones that cultivate my memory,

and *all* that tussle and that linger;
a latent sigh
born of my index finger.

Chapter IV
Like Propellers



towards an *end*



we drifted
like
propellers
through
an open sky
above a field
of tall
yellow grass
like
setting suns
far out
on the weald



just like
a cooling sun
born softly of mid-winter
beats upon
the ground
causing damp
to rise
to gas

I felt our bond
transition
 dissi pate

or as a log does splinter
 when left out
 to dry
 in woodland
 until a blade
 will sure
 to *pass*

