

## Night, Water, Night

Black dock.

Slice of water at night.

Moving river water.

A woman in a red coat, looking off at—

A girl, really.

She's at the end of the dock.

If she spoke her voice would be blown away by the breeze.

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So you are about to enter into the sexual flow and movement that will be your life, as if stepping into a river. You are in body a girl a young woman standing on the edge of a dock at night and I don't know don't have any way of knowing what it is you're really thinking you are really doing out there at night a girl in a red coat at the edge of the dock looking out over the river.

You never saw that I was there looking at you though I was only a few feet away.

I lay on my side half asleep on the bridge of a friend's boat.

You appeared in the early hours of the morning I checked my wristwatch when I first saw you walk out of darkness surrounded by night breezes and bells clanging from a few boats rocking water it was a little after three in the morning and I was shocked when I saw how young you were a teenager alone on a dock at night you stood at the edge of the dock in a red jacket and looked out over water.

In the moonlight I could see your face I could see your eyes I was a shadow on a boat looking at a girl on a dock looking out with such sadness at moving water.

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Out of your sadness.

Depths watery dark.

Sound moves slowly.

The weight of your sadness a force.

Your eyes move over the river as if water were your sister.

Your eyes the river at night.

What is it that is feminine about this sadness?

Muffled.

Dark.

Embraced.

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A woman once pulled me to her body. We were in the hallway of her house, there was no one else around. She took my arms by the wrists and pressed my hands hard against her breasts. You want me, she said. I know you want me. Then she pushed me away and went angrily to her bedroom where she slammed the door.

This happened in a time of drama in a time of confusion. She was married. Her husband was my friend.

I am a man now nearing sixty years old.

That moment, the river flowing fast.

She was right. I did want her. For a time, I loved her.

This was many years ago and she is long since dead. Her husband is remarried with a new family and I can still remember the feel of her youth under my hands the electric resilience of her body we were like a flame up there in the bedroom hallway I still don't know if I behaved as a decent man or a coward.

I want to reach across the darkness and embrace you not with lust but with gratitude.

A girl entering into the body and life of a woman.

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Air moves and the night's music moves through air.

The breeze touches her face like a father who loves his daughter.

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Your nearness is loss.

I am something else now.

I am a father I am a husband.

The sight of you is loss.

The air around your body warmed by skin.

Knowing I am outside the circle of young women is loss.

The air around you breathes, it shares your life.

The night river which you think is other flows for you.

You are a force as elemental as the binding powers.

A young woman in a red jacket looking out over water and night.

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I arrived at her door in a loud city. It was her parents' house and they were gone, at work. We were both in our twenties. She came to the door wrapped in a towel. A thick red terrycloth towel knotted over her breasts. Her legs and neck and face still moist from the shower. Her hair wet, slicked back. I can't remember for sure what we did. I think we made love. But the moment when she opened the door, the silent house beyond her, one hand holding a red towel at her breasts, invitation in her eyes, wet hair and moist skin . . . . That moment is as alive as this one, when the moist night air blows over the river while a young woman looks out into the night.

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Love's dive to cat's strut, sail to God.

Enter into air, dissolution of body.

Nowhere, nowhere, even your skin disappears.

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Either this world is the world or this world is not the world and no one knows. No one knows either this world or the world that is not the world. Either this mask is this skin is the world or it's not. No one knows. And so how do we live? Either we live for this moment in this world or we don't. If this world is a mask and there is another world then how do we live? Is it a task? Is it one movement in a larger composition? Either this world is the world or there is a power like light and love humming under our skin that is something more than this world than us. This is what you live with, this question. When you extend your hand so that the tips of your fingers touch the skin of a man's face are you the hand of God are you a piece of light becoming the movement of light through time are you a piece of God doing God's bidding are you becoming God in the reach of your hand making that connection—or are you an animal doing what animals do? Or are they the same thing? When you die will your body rot and become the body of the world which in time will rot and in time return to the nothing from which we all spring as animals as this world? Or will you go on? There are many who believe we go on. When you touch a man's face these questions are the movement of your fingers on his skin.

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The child emerges.

The single self is pulled and for a moment destroyed.

Out of you.

Into you.

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You walk away and leave me and the dock empty.

There is still the sound of water there is still the clanging of bells and warmth that comes with absence.

It's as if the years are moving water.

I have sailed along the current of years to this place where you are embarking.

Old man looking at a young woman in the quiet of river and night.