

In Depth

Before dark we took a walk through a scrappy park above the harbor, and you kept interrupting our reminiscence to refer to our surroundings as *the wood*, which you thought sounded distant and imaginary. A cruise ship in the near distance bellowed its farewell and tourists stood on the deck and waved at no one and took pictures of the cityscape. And they took pictures of us too, it seemed, walking in your mythic elsewhere. This cheesy communion must have awoken something unexpected in you, because you suddenly began to sing.

You looked me in the eye, held my one hand with both of yours; you grazed my shoulder with the back of your fingers. The sound, your song, was forced out like you were pumping, sudden and without limits. The notes far exceeded your range but you remained committed to your performance, measuring out the pitches with an elevated hand.

I knew the song, but not your version of it. Towards the middle refrain there's an improvised maneuver with a remarkable high C and you sped toward it, leaving out lines, or replacing them with "ok, ok, ok" and "getting there". The original passage is like tight metal zip line, a thick wire strung tight between two platforms, trees all around. You cried out as you sailed through the air.

You were like a member of a chorus, who breaks rank and starts counting aloud, altering the beat, and changing the words. *Got to get back to the garden*, you sang, tremulously, it was so ridiculous. And we walked, plodded slowly through a jungle where the trees were aching with foliage, hanging down to the ground, sweeping away the dirt.

We picked up little purple flowers that grew among the tree branches and threw them in the air like rice, like confetti. But the trees were made of metal and painted brown and then green and the flowers were stubborn dandelions. You then hit a wobbly vocalese that was so high it punctured the tree bark, resounding in its metal casing. I plumbed my memory for a moment, hazy and green with pink crescents, like the ones I wanted to wear when I was younger, after I'd seen a film about druggy summer love.

Later at the restaurant I couldn't afford, a waiter brought us an amuse bouche of battered plums nudged into a sphere of spicy mayonnaise. There were two plums, and mine tasted acidic as I lolled it around in my mouth for a moment. I bit down, I looked at the deep red walls fitted with a stainless steel skirting and I wanted to be outside.

Are you crying? I asked because I saw your chin tilt and your eyes fill up. No, you responded, the plums are so tart.