

Memorize the Places You Wanted Me

Three Poems

*Anja*Oliver Schneider*

picture this:

a warm late-spring day, a meadow
by the harbor, a five-minute walk from your house.
a blanket under greening trees, sunlight
through rustling branches. I feed you blueberries,
crackers, your favorite chocolate-covered peanuts.
you cross-legged, and I lean into your lap,
head against your chin, your hazelnut hair
shimmering in the sun, eyeliner eyes
peek out from 1950s sunglasses.
your hands soft on my chest
like a whispered yes to my yearning,
seamless understanding of corporeal
contradiction, and we just gaze,
out, eyes drawn to water,
find romance amidst industry,
while I read poetry out loud, and I slow down
on the lines I want you to hear most,
and you listen to me, you listen,
and I hope each syllable falls
onto your cheeks like little kisses
wind-blown, quiet wishes I speak out into air.

picture this: a femme and a kind-of-butch,
both outlaws in our own ways,
in yet-unspoken love in your bedroom
in the dark that night.
I can taste the day still on your lips,
the smell of grass on your skin, and the heat
that keeps my legs between yours

is more urgent than the sun's
earlier that day, but no less tender.

picture this: a space we create
wherever we go. whenever I go,
these pictures of you and I
will follow me anywhere.
these pictures: a coming home
with a view beyond the ships
on the horizon: possibility
in the salt-water air
tastes almost as sweet
as your rouged velvet lips—

Dear Theresa,

lying here tonight, I hear raging down the streets. No scream out of context. Enemy closed, stranger buried. Window nights refuse hypothetical healing.

I am swallowing memory—

That summer, I trusted you with my best love. Shame smiled, but you refused to listen. Shore smoothed tender. Shared wonder, fear danced bloody. Eyes falling, swollen, set free. Liberation unloaded on our hands. The price: etched into our curves. Our tears washed off cigarette burns, cuffed hands, law dressed in threats. We prayed feeling. The times I couldn't let you touch me, I was never alone.

Oh precious pain; sore, punching heart. No home could memorize the places you wanted me. See me small, sweet warrior woman. Full of wounds, anger taunts me, mocking. The mirror becomes an awful photograph.

Theresa, my fierce storm, my lonely eyes. Coax me out of my village tonight. Quietly, burn the politics, the blue-collar town. Road-map me back to pride, melt the angry stories into passion. Gently, gently, and I: flushed. My tie: fists. I survive to last.

A pink glow, slow sky. Sweet sepia faces. Buffalo battles until morning. I'll miss this place, running.

Good night, my love.

Note

To craft this poem, I exclusively used words from the first chapter of Stone Butch Blues and rearranged them in a new way. I merely altered the tense of a few verbs to better fit the poetic narrative and kept the very first and very last line of the chapter to establish a connection to the original work. Although this poem shares certain themes with Stone Butch Blues, it is not a reinterpretation of the novel; rather, it is my own piece of work that was creatively inspired by and pays tribute to the novel.

In the morning, I feel the strongest:

My want for you, still fresh, moves right to my center. Your edges shadow clear in our room before an awakening sky. Caught in your routine, you are all skin and lipstick. I want to crawl inside of you and stay there, curled and quiet, but scheming. My body, loud with potential, fills the room, and you abandon any effort to get dressed. Mid-rise cotton hugs my thighs, my waist, my curves that aren't curves, only in the way that water curves to waves. How I move in the midst of it, I burst with contradiction, and I know that this is the charge that pulls you to me across our bedroom floor, and you arrive lust-scented, all honey.

Your hands pour over my thighs, my soft-haired belly, all places at once, and I swallow your soft sides, laced breasts—constant spillage becomes a dance of hands and fingers and mouths, meticulous explosions of gender and desire. We shift, and flow against each other. My body tells your fingertips what it wants, and you meet me there. I flip us both, hands on wrists on sheets. From this perspective, I am your whole world, and I want it this way. I watch your face as I enter you, leather melting to my thighs. You welcome me, draw me into you, invite us both into mystery. Every time anew, our bodies learn how to open by becoming each other.

With you here, hidden and wide, all of me turns marine, divine connections. Here, it all makes sense: the way I want to make you French toast every morning, fuck you deep and slow to midnight. The way my short hair frames my face, severe but always soft in my eyes. The way you touch me; the way I want you to. The way I touch you back. All of me becomes dark blue and determined: ink settling, a map where I can locate you and me and us. But there is no paper, no threat of finality, just water: always shifting, and in its depths, endless.

We know what they call us. We know accusations from all sides. But in this moment, only you. Every moan a miracle, absolute surrender. Our bodies springing with pleasure, we run right through their hands. Yes, I am giving you your femmeness and you are giving me my butchness. But what is wrong with mirrors? As sweat gathers between us, we are giving each other the gift of ourselves.

Here in bed, together: our fractured selves, far from what we've been handed. It was not an easy departure, but an inevitable one. Then: what was left of us, and the flowers we grew. Exile becomes bright purples and yellow, even under water.

After the wave, now full, the body tired from being shown its own image. We rest into each other, awake and sated. Small intimacies of silence, breath, sweat drying.

By now, the spring sun leaves no room for shadows. In the light, I see all of us. And I know exactly who we are.

