

THE LAST WORDS OF A MISERABLE CONDEMNED MAN

I miss you, and in missing you I persist, and in that persistence I dissolve, and in that dissolution I name myself, though to name you — I know — does not absolve me, but envelops me, returns me to myself, resolves me into that which does not resolve, into that which neither ceases nor prays nor begins.

Two years have been spoken, or two accursed ages, or two eternities written in blessed ash, since a judgment without chamber nor speech nor tablet, a judgment without visible God nor audible law nor accessible voice, decreed without speaking, decided without beating, that you should ascend — whole light, sincere form — while I remained — primal shadow, savage inheritance — within that which names me: the son, the residue, the dark prince of ancient Lucifer, secure upon his throne and insecure within his being, certain of falling and incapable of understanding why.

And yet it was not the decree that revealed me to myself, but the contact, the pact, the precise impact of that which should never have been touch.

Because your hand — your hand — upon brushing my skin did not rest, did not settle, did not seal, but yielded, and within that yielding emitted a sound, a forbidden sound, a crooked sound, a slight restrained creaking, as though purity itself, upon touching impurity, remembered a wall anterior to the future, as though your flesh, in touching me, denied the very law that sheltered it.

I heard it.

I heard it.

I heard it.

And within that hearing I was wounded, instructed, abolished.

Did you know?

Did you know when you loved me?

Did you know when your hand trembled and still descended?

Was I attempt, event, instrument of a violent design?

Was I the prepared proof, the manifest fissure, the question without answer?

Was it the universe — cruel verse, adverse reverse — that offered you my abyss as mirage, only to then, within the same cynicism, laugh at my baptism in suffering itself?

The archangels speak to me — they speak, they do not fall silent, they do not fail — and in their silver tongue they recount, expose, attest, that you are intact, exact, perfect within your rectitude, that you were never mine, only the idea of you was mine, and it is that idea which condemns me.

And below — further below — others celebrate, reverberate, contemplate my alien grief, and bow not before my kingdom, but before my ruin, for what is a prince stripped of that which defines him if not a sign already declining?

They call me king, they call me law, they call me what I neither am nor shall ever be.

Because I am beginning to lose you.

I remember you and lose you.

I remember you and lose you.

I remember you and lose you.

First a gesture, then a remnant, then the context, then the text,

and within that slow unmaking of you I understand — and the understanding burns me — that to forget your form deforms my own, that if you do not remain then my being dissolves and does not return.

Am I alive?

Am I dead?

Or am I merely the uncertain echo of something that believed itself once to have been real?

And then — then — like a verdict that does not console but instead reshapes, the angels reveal to me, unveil me, annul me, and anchor me to a single certainty that does not cease:

That you carry it.

That you carry it.

That you carry it.

It does not matter why.

It does not matter for what.

It does not matter whether you remember or forget what once was.

The ring.

That simple circle where I once existed, where I still glimmer, where I am not annihilated.

That divine and clandestine sign upon which time has not inscribed its destiny.

And while you carry it,

and while you carry it,

and while you carry it,

even if you do not name me, even if you no longer marvel at me, even if you fail to recognize me among the shadows,

I shall know — and in knowing I shall burn —

that once I existed,

and that beside your memory I shall die.