

She pedalled the rusty bicycle up the street. Hornrims, hightops, cutoffs. Plaid shirt. Her hair the color of cranberries. Obvious things for all to see, there where the streetcars turned back toward the river. But what none could see, what he alone knew, a secret which even she did not know about herself, was that she was made of daffodils. Cantabricus, Caracas, Chanterelle. Potions and spells.

She stood on the pedals, she rose up and down. He waved as she approached. Her smile broke, children hidden in the underbrush. The bicycle scraped to a halt beside him.

Hi, she said.

And Hi, he said. Dry leaves stuffed his mouth. He was ash on an old woman's sleeve.

So what brings you out of the woods? she said. The bicycle creaked corroded carnival rides between her thighs. The ragged line her cutoffs made against her pale skin. Ivory petals in the sun.

When did you color your hair? he said.

Oh I don't know, she said. A week ago or so.

This she said as though he had not seen her under moonlight, her skin cast blue and smooth, porcelain, her mouth wide open wet drinking that pink pollen sunlight. As though he had not tasted Spring sifted through her skin, though the season was Autumn or Winter. As though he had not.

I like it, he said. Your hair.

Thanks, she said. I think it looks pretty cool. She ran a hand through the cranberry colored hair. Burnt brown leaves drifted in her eyes. Leaves caught in his throat, made him cough.

So what are you up to these days? she said.

Not much, he said. Not doing much these days at all. Just the sculpture. Oh. Finally finished the. The bedroom. He scratched his neck. He reached his hand toward her bicycle. Could touch not even that. No end to the withering of withered flowers.

And you? he said. What've you been up to?

Oh saving up my money to go to Ireland. Selling off my things. My records. Small sacrifices. I got to get out of this place. She shifted her weight from side to side. He had seen her without her hornrims, naked in the fen, belly arched to the trees, her fists tearing twayblades, muddy heels dug into the still point of the turning world. Hispanicus, Hotspur, Hades. Stricken dumb by his own narcotic. Spring in Autumn, what she was. Should he tell her these things?

I'm sorry?

She rolled her eyes. Stirred the burnt brown leaves. I asked if you were still planning to move out of the bungalow. At the end of Summer?

No. Yeah. I don't know, he said. Her shirt was knotted, revealed her belly. Crushed trumpets, chopped petals, powdered and then mixed with water, poured thick into the mold, pulled warm from the oven, this recipe, daffodil plaster, was she.

I haven't decided when I'm going to move, he said. The time, you know?

Oh no shit it was winter just yesterday wasn't it? She spun a pedal with her hightop. Maxima, Maraval, Manna. Plucked by maidens' hands on riverbanks. And leaves filled with children. These things she was made of. God what are we still doing in this town? she laughed.

Stars slimmered in the corners of his eyes. Pinpricks burnt his nose. I don't know, he said. Why we're here. He coughed and glanced at passing motorists. No one knew anything. Time past and time present. And what of time future. He wiped the stars from his eyes. Fusarium, Fortune, and Folly. These things she was also made of. No end to the voiceless wailing. And the withered flowers.

Where you headed? he asked.

Home to see the folks, she said, and spun the pedal.

The blood shook tomtoms in his head. He cleared his throat. Got time for a drink, maybe?

In the mud, in the fen, her arms and legs a fist wrapped around him, her mouth stretched to drink the cold blue moonlight. Nowhere near this place. The leaves in her eyes watched him. The stars in his own would not hide themselves from the light.

I'm sorry I can't I really should get going, she said. Tortuosus, Testament, Tuesday's Child. The failure of charms and spells. Stumble of parchment feet. And apples caught in mud. The smallest things prefigured in the stars. These things she saw in his eyes.

Remember how we used to laugh? he said, to shake the dumbness, and because there was no time.

I should get going, she said. It's Spring you know.

He grasped her hand. But remember how you would come up behind me, and put your arm through mine? he said. Like we had all the time in the world? he said.

She said nothing. The leaves billowed once in her eyes.

And what of the way you screamed in my mouth, and the way you bruised so easily, and the mud we used to hide our bodies, earth, loam, rustic mirth, mirth of those under earth, holding each other by the arm or the hand, nourishing the daffodils. And what of your face in the shadows, eyes masked black save two sparks of light, your mouth filled with the laughter of children hidden in foliage, time past and time present, what might have been and what has been. What of these things?

I've got to go now, she said. It was nice to see you.

Yeah, he said. He let go her hand.

On the corner, the ding ding of the streetcar, people shouting and the honk of horns, those sounds metal leaves passed through the two of them, and she rose up on the pedals, Gloria Mundi, Gossamer, on Golden Cycle she rose, a smile on her lips, face tipped toward the sun.