Airship!
Notes on an Ode to a Grecian Urn

Like the virgin bride of perfect quietness!
The foster-child of silence and slow time

Porcelain historian who cannot express
A flower tale more sweet than thine;
What legend does your shape imply
About gods & men & both—
Are you in Tempe or Arcadia?
Which men & gods are these? Which maidens?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
Whichorns&tamborouines? What wild ecstasy?

Songs you can hear are great, but the ones you can’t
Are sweeter; played low on the organ, play on.
Play not to my desire, but to something more dear,
Play to my spirit sweet songs of silence.

This bold lover, never, never can she kiss,
Within the space of a breath— please don’t let me down.
She will never pass away & she will never find her kiss;
Yet forever, in beauty, she will love.

Forever panting, forever young;
Forever breathing human passion far above,
Leaving the heart high-sorrowful and cloyed—
With a headache, dying of thirst.
Who are you coming to the sacrifice?
What is this green altar, mysterious priest?
Leading that heifer in her bellows to the sky,
Gowned in silk and garlands.
What little town by the river & seaside
Or mountaintop citadel of peace
Is emptied of almost everyone one fateful morn?
And, what little town, your streets forevermore
silent, without a soul to tell
Of the desolation, forever, inreturn.

A prism! High altitude! With breeding
Mighty men and maidens, overwrought.
Without a forest branch or a single leaf of grass,
silent, teasing out our thoughts
Into eternity: this Cold pastoral!

When this generation’s laid to waste
You will remain, in the midst of other sadnesses
Than ours, our friend, the one who taught us,

“All you need is love.”—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.
et again Illana found herself scouring the news.

- Jesus, it’s only Antigone, I didn’t think anyone read anymore.

A particular, positive review regarding her performance emerged. She should really read it before heading to the stage.

She stared at herself in the vanitie. The warning light flickered in her room. She found it with no time to read, only thirty metres to the elevator door.

She took a deep breath, searched for her soul in the mirror and siezed it; Illana scanned the review and read aloud the final line.

- I know it’s silly, but that’s what she said in the paper, Elena let Illana know it was a doozie, something about ascendance.

The review was right, Illana has risen indeed, & after tonight it was over. She was so relieved.

The curtain would fall & there would be time to rest. She’d never felt such longing. This was it, time to take the stage.

Hagar rose from the wicker chair.

Chapter 1- Octavo Adagio !!, 1564 d.b.a. – 8:31 p.m.
Clandestine Rondavoo - Jona, Hagar, The Gambler

-ANTE up, the Gambler said, an exorcise, to lift the silence.
- The silence suits me fine. Hagar replied with a smile.

She light popped the corner of her pack of cigarettes against a corner of blue-green felt.

Two protruded out, she lit one & tossed the other into the center of the triangle.
The Gambler accepted. He turned them over & continued... too many ellipses.. and incurring my grace instead of my wrath will prove priceless in future endeavors.

The Gambler took a long pull on his whisky, and then cooled down his throat with beer. He turned over the Heirophant & the Queen of Pentacles.

Jona answer with the Mance & ace of cups.

- If he was the hanged man. Hagar noted.
- Nothing you have compares.
- I have access. I could la the innerchange of the City, Megalopolis, at your feet.
- I have no desire for the City, Megalopolis, that’s so silly, he thought, I desire the same thing as you; Freedom from governance, freedom from the ability of being governed.

Jona knew what he meant.

To make this happen, this truth happen, we’re going to need an airship, & we’re going to need a dragon.

A Minor Riot

Illillana&Elena, Powerstrode, oncaemore’,

- También!

Ialreadifeelinbetterintheelevator.

- Illianaisanotherillllana, silly&seriouser. Elenaintoned.

A wellspring of relife, she was final coming out of the underground, three long journeys to go. Theywouldmakeitoutokthoshehoped, itsnightime, thisiswhatits likethere,

Thisisawfulgood, someone said

Aproposition? he asked

Imnotgoingtospareitherofthem, I don’t understand who’s speaking right now.

Lostinthemilkwhiterisingruins, “OutlandStation”

- wherethecitymegalopolis&milkwhitedunescollide, Powerstated.

This is awful, shecouldntakeitanymore, Elenaimitatedilllliana.

- boo clap booclap, what the fuck.

Theywerewaitingonatrain.

- Whatthefuck right now, Powerstatedagain.
- Itillbeforeverdude. Elenaoverestimated.

Thetraincameintothestation.
- HallelujahPraise! Illianaemanated.

She’s trying to upstage me, Illanathought
I’m trying to upstage her, Elenadmitted.
Illanawatchedthewindandsandcometogathermomentslonger.

Mr Bloom

Jona kicked open a gate to the air and braced his grips on the hempline binding Mr Bloom's most limp arms and at his belt in the small of his back.

-Jona wait. The Gambler called out from behind.

Jona waited.

Hagar followed the Gambler out onto the covered balcony, a strong breeze blew his silver hair out of the broad upturned collar of his Captain's jacket.

-Goddamned beautiful night isn’t it, he talked to himself.

Hagar strode again elegant around the Gambler at just the wrong moment, the wind whipped his hair across her face; she swatted it away.

- Let him know who’s doing this, Hagar intoned, rip off the mask, show him my face.

- But leave in the gag. the Gambler insisted.

Jona heaved Mr Bloom over sideways again and kicked him to his knees. The Gambler knelt in front of him.

He should see you too, then be done with it. Hagar ordered offhand, turning back to the bar inside. Jona shifted the captive, making him face him.

-And Jona, Hagar smiled, he's terrified of heights.

Jona nodded. He watched bewilderment turn to understanding, disappointmen and shame in an old man's eyes.

He’d never met Bloom, not until this day, the day he picked him up. Jona readjusted his grip again & aimed, peering over the wood-ledge into bustling, lighted city streets, squaring trajectory and arc.

-Openletters-
They were still sisters, Away we go! Elena said.

Her heart brimmed with joy, slight overflowing, Everything is new again, Illana admired their suite.

We need to finish this letter, is there anything you would like to add?

Elena giggled and thought I love you. The interior was gorgeous.

- I think we should bait them with sex, drugs & adventure, she said.

- And then tell them the truth!

Elena loved to finish her sister’s sentences, they laughed together.

- What do you think father will do with them? Illana asked.

- Throw them in the inexplicable canon. Elena answered.

They wondered what happened to Powers.

- I don’t know, we need to get out of town & finish the letter.

The train left outland station for Larissa.

Pint to the Sky

- The short round man did not squirm, he shifted his weight with Jona’s and lunged. There were far less dignified deaths. Mr Bloom followed the anchorlines with his gaze and sailed deep into the dark.

- In this small, slow spiral, a glimpse of the airship in total emerged with the marvelous City, Megalopolis far below. Mr Bloom’s acrophobia shuddered, a pierce, penetrating just beneath...

- his ribcage, tore through his back. Bloom gasped with pain and stared down the one hundred and twenty stories below, pinned to the sk on the Gwenis Antennae, over all of the City, Megalopolis below.

- Mr Bloom contented himself, perched, satisfied, relishing this, presence, engaged in an excellent & unterrified birds-eye-view of avast cityscape below.

- None, before or since, will, or ever shall, go down quite the same. -Cuckoo, cuckoo! He called cool into the night air, heaving for breath.

- Mr Bloom died waiting for his echo’s return.

Epimenides.

Bloom rolled Roman over the deck of the airship; into open sea.
It was done & he didn’t like it, but it was done & that was a relief.

Bloom went back into the bar, Hagar was out of sight, clean hands all around.

Plump Epimenides, herein reffered to as Emil, snorred loud with his face flat on the bar; his cheek & the tip of his left nostril rested in a shallow pool of burboun & bile.

Bloom hurled a steady, splattering stream of liquor & spittle onto the acrilic bartop [like a fire hydrant] & collapsed, stiff as a board & flat on his back.

Emil rose a moment later, perpendicular to the rouge, all-weather carpet, & muttered an asiduous hotenposche to either an invisible bartender or some hidden apparition, he crashed back once again and planked across the lacquared birch.

Roman woke concious but inert & hit the water hard. The betrayal was unexpected, but it wasn’t a surprise.

Also, it wasn’t long after he sank into the deep that his physical self departed, a void, an eerie cloud of unknowing swelled around him, he became something new.

If he returned, the Roman so easily rolled off his own ship wouldn’t be coming with him. A new world of subtle tactile impressions, bold forms ad infinitum, twisting in and out of an unknowable ocean & et still equitable.

This strange world, teetering between utter nothingess and bliss, riddled and churning inside, relentless, tumbling, waves.

-This is not the afterlife or an afterthought, he thought aloud alot about the hereafter.

In the moment, if it ended here, that would be fine with him, but then it would end, and this is the begining, and there is still so much further to go.
Roman’s story was indeed very far from over, as we find ourselves now engaged in this otherworldliness, our meandering masquerade & puissant reparte’.

Hagar heard him fall from steerage; she was avoiding, rather hiding, from the drunken idiocy overhead.

Once she heard the splash, she knew what was afoot.

Hagar strode again through the foyer & into the bar. Emil was sleeping in his filth, Bloom still planked, flat out on his back, rigid on the rouge carpet.

She tiptoed around his voimt & rolled the traitor to his side with her bootheel.

Hagar again ritual slapped the wooden sign hanging over the door to the Stilgar’s rear deck, it read “No Suicides Allowed”, and hurried over to the gate to nowhere, she flung it open and undressed.

Hagar left behind her leathers, neatly folded, in a wicker beech chair she’d never risen from before.

- Fuck them, she thought, let them know exactly where she was.

Hagar clutched her pregnant belly to secure him in the fall, then she plunged, heels-first into the sea, after Roman.

She found him 15 feet below the surface (At this point, I almost had the blue dragon swallow them whole, given all the gnomencalure hotenpouche, but that isn’t what happened, not one bit, though he was lurking in the shallows near Seaside somewhere).

The Gambler
Hagar rose from a wicker chair again.

-What do you expect to win with this dragon of yours? The Gambler asked Jona on deck.

The skyline of the City, Megalopolis, was casual consumed across the horizon by the rising tide of white sand & the lolling crescents of dunes below.

A single line, train tracks, they swished & tilted with the inclines, a fading ink trailing their giant airborne pen.

The tracks veered south, Jona never saw a train.

-Freedom
-And the wealth it takes to buy said Freedom?
-Indeed.
-Go fuck yourself you’re living for Freedom...

-You’re living for Fame, the papers, there was no disdain, And maybe she can buy that, but she’s a tricksy bitch.

The Gambler intoned.

He placed a hand on Hagar’s shoulder with affection and chuckled, Fame.

-Then what do you do it for man? asked Jona like calling a bluff.
-He does it for the hunt. Hagar answered, smoking & sipping champagne.

Her chin-cropped hair soft flickered a feint maroon in the shade of the archway on the rear deck. A cool desert breeze rustled across the balcony.
She isn’t wrong, a mine of calm reflection settled onto the Gambler, but I have it... distilled, he thought aloud, or maybe she found the fullest reduction. Here it is – I live for the Freedom, he thought, to die for Posterity.

Hotenposche. Jona Joked

- Dammit, I lost what I was sayin. The Gambler pounded his palm on the hard, wicker armrest, ah-h, there it is.

- My fame was preordained, he claimed, being only my father’s son.

- Here he goes. Hagar sighed.

- There I remained, until Stilgar became the blade & she apt ripped the cord from round my throat, free.

The gambler’s calm demeanor little belied the fierce intensity and focus on some wild vision of himself.

- May she rest in peace. Jona & Hagar laughed, the Gambler continued.

- No longer bound to the chains of my father’s name, I was free to rule the skies, a Kingdom of my own.
- At a price. Jonah intended.
- Indeed, my man, Indeed, the Gambler strode the wooden beams across the balcony, wind whipping at his face, again he surveyed the vast gloaming ocean of sand.
- And what a glorious price it is, the Gambler turned earnest to Jona, now standing by his side.

Jona Listened.

- Everything’s exchanging values.

The gambler raised his eyebrows, reassuring him.

- And we get to hunt dragons for a living.

The door clicked behind them, Hagar had stolen away. Jona resisted his instinct to follow.

The Gambler posited his arm around his new partners shoulder.
- I lust for Life! The Gambler sighed full-hearted. And that’s enough to echo... he counted in his head & on his fingers, seven generations!

Jona grinned sideways, soon they would be reaching the mountains. He wished to speak with Hagar alone.

- You were born with the Wealth too you know. The Gambler cheers’d to the air with his maker’s, neat.
- Her temper’s only timbered by the Fame.
- Indeed, my man, indeed.

There they stared together till the crest of the City, Megalopolis swooned & sank again beneath the milk-colored dunes.

**Illana’s Letter**

Powers agreed.

It’s come to my attention, yet again; And I don’t mean to sound impatient, as most of your readers know, I’ve been through this before: very public, what some consider shameful, humiliation (I didn’t feel that way about it), please forgive my flagrant punctuation. Was leaving the theatre before the final act haughty? Vainglorious? Of course it is, it is! As intended. Embrace it or let me be, embrace me or let it be. Those nemisises, those very particular nemisises, remain... ineffective & unaffecting. This isn’t something I should have to slay, I shouldn’t even have to think it; however, the recent disappearance of my friend & colleague Mr Bloom renders an imagination in suspicion. I understand, it’s difficult; difficult given the accounts of his relationship with my father, and difficult to believe my early exit, leaving my sister’s speech..., was unrelated. Well it was, so there.

I may be many things: a delusional, entitledadulterous, ambidexurusnarcssist, anexpectant mother, I’m not. Iam sexually adventurous, perhaps inaccordance with some strange, hermetically seal’d, version of monogamy, and something aboutassonance; ah-h the bliss, sublime digressions, wild dreams. I am many things& we know what the poet says, “I contain multitudes.”

I am a friend. I am not a murderer & I am not connected to anything regarding the disappearance of Mr Bloom. Neither is my father. This City, Megalopolis, it isn’t so big. I’m sure he’ll turn up sooner or later. I treasure our friendship.

Love & Regards,

Illana Aphrodite

- It’s flippant, they’ll say, insane, Illana thought
- perfect. Her sister replied. The train swished through white sand.
Seaside

Then she was there, standing at his bedside, he layed his hand on her exposed belly, naveless.

- How long? He asked.
- You know, she smiled, any day now.
- Where are they? He asked.
- We shouldn’t worry, the important part’s your safe. Are you?
- I’m safe, he thought a moment, it’s happened like you said, all of it.
- You’re still surprised.
- Yes. He answered.

The Audition

Jona found her in her cabin. An ironwrought, spiral staircase near the back of the bar was there for him to nimble down, along into the foyer:

Fresh red carpet, black & gold inlaid persian rug, two-toned walls, red from the floor to the moulding, gold from his waist to the crown.

He stared at himself in the mirror overhead
from here he had options.

Here was the heart of the human part of the Stilgar, the person he needed to help him. Where everyone was proper routed.

Every centimeter of wall between the stair cases, ascending & descending, was filled with ornate and oddly shaped mirrors.

- Quite the eccentric indeed. Jona talked to himself.
He thought, damn now his word’s already stuck with me.
The up stairs in front of him would lead back to the captains quarters.
He shuffled down the soft, adjacent staircase and pressed through the rich mahogany door ingraved, “FIRST MATE”.

- Bwha! He didn’t know if he should go in or not.

She remained with her back to him, though she heard him come in.

He found her waiting at the precipice, where the wood flooring turned to glass & curved snakelink with the form of the bow.

- It looks like you could fall.

She laughed, I’m fair unconcerned, still facing away.

Jona went to the bar at his right.

- The dunes look soft enough, he asked, like pillows.

She rolled her eyes and joined him.

- If the glass goes, I’ll be doing something more exciting than procrastinating with you. She paused & poured two neat piles of powder from somewhere in the her jakcet sleeve. And falling will be far from my mind.

She played with the powder with her metallic, grey nails. She poured them each a jameson, rocks.

Jona sipped his whiskey & followed her, he powdered his nostrils with a couple long ups and four short bursts of downs.

- You can distinguish, she stated.
- It’s the consistency, not the color. He insisted.

Darling. She cheered him to the air & sipped, pushing herself a way, into a glide, her index finger to his brow.

Hagar crossed her legs & watched him from the intricate, handcrafted, plush stool at her vanitie.

The first golden shades of sunset began to fade into the light covering green foothills past the desert’s shore, into the distance.

Jona ignored the closing door, shuffling footsteps overhead.

He thought, now she watches me, before meeting her gaze, it will be in the blink of an eye.

The Sighting

- Looks like I’m the one. He asked rhetorical, eyes fixed beyond the uncurtained window. Soon there would be teeming mountains.
He couldn’t know, he wouldn’t know, he won’t. Hagar resolved, she felt the warmth insider gather, descend and encapsulate in waves, trickling through her extremeties, clearing her soul.

She opened her eyes and he was watching her.

She unhitched the straps of her sandals and slid them underneath her with the tips of her toes.

- And may they never decieve. She palmed the three encrusted rubies in her necklace & caught them with a gentle flick of the clasp at the nape of her neck.

Hagar trapped the rubies in her jewlery box. She pinned back her hair, aside.

Her dress brushed Jona’s knee & her metallic fingernail trailed along the outside of his thigh as she moved graceful to the closet from her vanitie.

She let the dress fall, framed in the light of the doorway & lazy shadows in the interior suite.

Her evangeline silhoulette braced the slight step out. She lifted the silk heap with her foot & hung it neatly to the side.

Jona & Hagar shared a sly grin & once more, again, she walked passive past him to the breach where woodfloor became glass & open air.

The mountains rose from the foothills in the distance, they grew closer. She was excellent at revision. The sun would set soon.

- Won’t you follow. She asked.

Before he could assume she stopped him

- First, the shirt. She insisted.

She looked cunning, over her shoulder.

Jona was stealing the buttons a way at the shirt. My boots were already off.

His boots were kicked up at the base of the bar, She giggled, Indeed, and turned back to the view.

Jona’s hands & forearms took her by her shoulders.

His chest pressed into her back, It’s beautiful, he whispered the words, they fell from her neck down along the inside crest of her breasts.

- Now is when the’re sighted best. Hagar breathed.
- Just before sunset. He kissed her. Something glittered.
- There will be more. He folded his thumbs beneath the lace elastic. She stepped out onto the glass & turned to Jona.
- Time... anything that matters. Is something you have to take.

She felt him press against her again.
Jona took her to the glass, & she was calm & overcome, their bodies arch’d, he bit & kissed her ear.

She pushed down her hands and looked to keep from fumbling with his belt, chest flushing.

A part of her thoughts, long forgotten, some things need be complete, she thought, it escaped her, falling out.

A Minor Train

The Gambler stared intent, though the glass wall of the of his cabin & listen’d to the water run.

He was certain she, they, would be along short, the shower was getting to him.

He rapped three times at the hardwood without leaving the window. The shower stopped.

He heard them ascend through the foyer.

- He has to be. Hagar announced entering, Jona in tow.
- He is, I’m certain. The Gambler glanced at their reflection in the window. Her duster was still wet around the collar.
- What could’ve injured it? Jona asked.
- Either a mate or a rival. The Gambler replied.
- The other ships are far from here, confirmed in port upon departure. Hagar clarified.

She stood astide aside the captain, glaring at the train, it chipp’d away at rolling hills towards the mountains above.

Jona wouldn’t know the dragon was injured, she’s coaching him. Excellent, he thought, then we have a crew.

- What’s with all the altitude? Jona inquired.
- We need its temper subdued, we linger above through the mountains, as far as we can.
- She’ll be lost on a hard chase through the valley, but if we can keep her abreast over delta & seaside... the captain finished.

The sun was still high now, they had drifted into the clouds above the approaching cliffs.

The train became an ant-queen, a distinct, white marking on her back.
- She will fly before the tunnel underground. Hagar rejoined, the Gambler nodded.
- Then it begins. Jona asked rhetorical.
- Indeed. The trio descended to gun-deck & steerage.
- You know what this means? Hagar asked Jona, drowning in reflections.

Jona sustained the silence long enough for her to finish.

Their eyes met, she glanced at him over her shoulder again.

- We’re going to take her alive.

**The Two Way**

The Gambler radioed the train.

- Have Powers stick his head up & see what’s on the train.
- 10-4, Illana was working at her writing desk, admiring the view.
- Tell me how he looks when he comes down. The Gambler added.
- What’s he getting at? Elena perked up from the daybed on the other side of the suite. This train may very well be the greatest thing about being an Aphrodite.

Powers came in from the least of the last of the two-car train, his personal quarters where not as swank as the sisters, but they were plenty more than adequate.

- What does he want? Powers asked Illana.
- Poke your head up & have a look. She pointed to a hatch at the top of a short, wroughiron spiral staircase. He looked at her funny.
- What, that’s what he said. She said.

Elena pressed her face to the window by the daybed, Stilgar was up there somewhere; either too high to see him now, or floating directly over them.

Wind roared into the suite as Powers poked his head out of the hatch in the roof of the train. He came down with a very different expression.

- Oh shit. Powers mouthed to Illana.
- He seems... quite shocked. She said.
- What is it? Elena grew excited. Illana silenced her a moment, waiting for the Gambler’s response.
- Ha-a, marvelous! The radio came to life again. Ladies, there’s a large white dragon on the second car behind you.
- A dragon! Elena emitted, her sister shushed her again with a motion. A black one, she thought.
- Don’t worry, it’s almost certainly injured, and it knows it won’t fit through the tunnel. Did powers see a wound?
She looked to him, still astonished, leaning on the staircase, he made a face.

- He didn’t see anything. Illana replied.
- Very well. I take it you’re all heading for the Mance?
- Of course father. Why did he ask, she thought, he’s the one who told me to go there straight away, right after the play.
- Excellent, after we take it I will see you there. She could hear his focus on the hunt.
- Is Hagar there? She asked.
- Of course she it my deat.
- Send her my love.
- She sends you hers in return, the Gambler replied, Stilgar out.

Ilana watched Powers & Elena search the sky through the window by her daybed, again looking for the airship.

- Take Elena to your quarters. I would like some time alone. Illana ordered.

Illana let her eyes linger over Powers, he looked quite fit in his tee & sleeping pants as he tooke her sister by the hand & led her to his cabin.

That dragon has to mean something, she thought, curious what they would do.

Illiana took Elena’s place on the daybe, flicke on a monitor showing her the other room & watched as Powers & Illana talked excitedly in silence.

**The Monitor**

Illana thought, excellent, the sun was just about to set behind the mountains to the west.

She locked the door & then wondered why she had; there was a dragon next door.

Illana turned on the radio & undressed; settling into the rose of the setting sun pouring through the window by the daybed.

She meditated, listening.

- Good evening, This is the City, Megalopolis, I’m Hera Snafu.
- & I’m Ehsan Uraskin.
- Early this morning emergency responders removed the remains of a famed actor & director Aloicuous Bloom from the tippy top of the Gwenis Antennae
- Authorities have yet to comment, but questions continue to swirl around the possible involvement of eccentric billionaire Roman Aphrodite.
- Their well-publicized dispute over Bloom’s selection as director of the recent sleeper hit “Antigone” in his Aphrodite Amphitheatre.
- His Stilgar being docked directly over the crime scene at the time of the alleged murder has also raised suspicions, “Who else could possibly be involved?” quoting Mayor McDonugh at a press conference earlier in the day.

Illiana turned up the volume on her remote.

- Also, fanning further speculation, Illana Aphrodite, star of Antigone, disappeared before the final scene of their final performance...
- With Bloom’s son, Powers & her sister Elena. Hera completed.

Illana inhaled.

- Leaving audiences stunned & confused as Bloom was forced to perform all four parts in the final scene.
- Critics wide lauded his performance before expressing their sincerest condolences later in the the day.

Illana’s toes began to curl.

- We’ll be updating you throughout the night with any late breaking news.
- Should further revelations come to light.

Illana sighed.

- In other news, President—

She unlocked the door, locked it back again and thought of when she met her brother at the Gala.

**Powers**

Roman & Hagar rested for a week in the upstairs seaside villa overlooking the sea. Hagar came in from the balcony.

- Any word on the whereabouts of Bloom? Roman asked.
- He is at home. Hagar answered, Emil landed in the delta for a moment last night & quickly departed again. He was spotted this morning at the butcher’s.
- You’re recuperated? Hagar knew Roman unestimated how close he came to death after the fall.
- Recuperated enough for handling Bloom. She wouldn’t argue with that.
Hand me the cane. (If Roman had let his shattered leg heal proper, he never would have needed the cane.)

**Steerage**

Jona stepped onto the glass at the bottom of the stairs. That will take some getting used to. He said.

- Maximum visibility, my man, Roman replied, we can’t chase dragons we can’t see.

Hagar patted Jona on the ass & shuffled a few almost invisible, clear glass steps & settled into the forward ball turret under the captain’s wheel.

- Watch this. Jona followed her & crouched to look over her should as she began to rotate & take aim at the train.

She smelled like shampoo. With a flip of her thumb several mechanisms in the barrel adjusted.

- Slow down, we may never find one this vulnerable again. Roman now stood behind them too.

A moment after it had left his mouth, Hagar fired. Jona thought she hit it, but nothing moved.

- Beginner luck. Roman sighed and turned away to make for the wheel, the wood seam out of place in the transparent shell.
- She couldn’t feel it? Jona asked.
- Anesthetics, we don’t come unprepared. And Hagar was out of the turret and back to Roman’s side. Jona followed.

Roman made a motion on the glass wall at the helm. Allthe glass tinted at once, dark blue.

- See. Hagar pointed to the train, now fast approaching mountains. A shimmering white light shined like a disco ball where she had struck the dragon’s back.
- We can stalk her here till sunset on the otherside & take her over the delta, once we’re fiscal over the mountains. Roman finished.
- I never thought we’d use them again.
- Get the harpoons. Roman finished again. Hagar hurried back up the stairs to the ship.

He started talking to Jona.

- Everything about the dragon that is special, the reason we must hunt them, Roman explained, is an adaptation for flight & fire.
- That which ignites their magnificent breath flows through their veins, giving them extra lift & agility in the air.
- That’s what powers this thing. Jona said.
Indeed, even their bones, ultralight & hollow, strong enough to hold us to this craft.

Jona glanced to the intermittent bracing, sealing this glass, the hull of the ship. That’s what they are, he thought.

That’s what they are. Roman confirmed.
So you’ve effectively mechanized the beast. Jona said.
Ha-a, Roman was pleased with himself, the only way to fly.
Few have the means to finance a project of that scale. That I understand. Still, where did you get the first one.
That, my man, Roman’s self satisfaction faded a shade, is another story.

Hagar came back down the stairs with a massive harpoon in each hand & two giants spools of hempline wrapped around each arm.

Come watch how I do this. She threw one of the spears & spools to Jona.

Underneath the captain he watched her make several adjustments to the ball turret, replacing parts until the harpoon was fixed in place.

Good thing he doesn’t wear a skirt. Jona joked.

Hagar laughed, he said the same thing, once, long ago.

**Jona**

Jona met Illana at a Gala slash fundraiser for the mayor. Her father did not attend.

Sheriff, it’s so nice to finally meet you.
I went to your show.
Oh did you? And what did you think?
It was alright, a little intellectual for me, but I couldn’t stop admiring the theatre.
Isn’t it marvelous. She affected.
It is, and to think that you live there, were raised there, it’s so underground.
Not that I don’t love to talk about my family & wealth, and I do appreciate the sentiment, but I understand we have business to attend to.

Jona didn’t flush, she stepped closer to her. For a moment it was just the two of them.

We do. He said. She sipped champagne.
Since you seem to know so much about me, allow me to indulge myself in you, or what I know of you.
Proceed.
May I see?
I only show that to people I kill.
- Ah-h, well, in that case.
- He held a six-inch, pearl handled pocket knife in his palm.
- The one you landed in his throat? She raised an eyebrow and accepted.
- The very one.
- It’s not so heavy.
- No, I just got lucky.

She folded it & put it in his front pocket.

- You will join my sister & I the night of the show. After my final scene we will leave. You & Bloom will be alone.
- That sounds like a plan. Jona was trying hard to conceal how excited he was.
- Very well. She dinged her glass to his, leaving.
- Illana wait.

Illana waited.

- Is it true what you told the papers?
- The papers? Oh my, about my virginity?
- Yes.
- It is. She kissed him on the cheek & walked away.

She thought why in the world would he ask me that.

**The Great White**

- Have Powers come in. Illana pressed a button and watched the monitor.

He dressed & left Elena’s room, in the open between train cars.

- No lock your door. Do not open it. Illan instructed her sister.

Powers knocked patient at first, then more frantic as reality set it.

A ghost-white, reptilian face glared into the cravass from atop the second train car.

Powers wailed in pain, fire rained down from overhead. He collapsed, charred remains severed & mangled beneath the train.

A moment before hurtling underground, the great, white dragon leapt from its perch on Powers car.

It tore & swallowed what remained before taking flight, circling into the mountains above.

**The Study**

Roman & Hagar stood ominous in the door to Blooms study, little Powers was playing with blocks in the warm sunlight coming through the window.

- Roman, said Bloom, half surprised, you’re alive.
Indeed. Through no fault of my own. He looked at Hagar. I really
should have known, father couldn’t handle me stealing the show. After
Stilgar, there was nothing he could do to catch me.
- And so he tried to take it. Hagar finished.
- We don’t blame you Bloom, you served my father well.
- But now things have to change.
- MY son will be here soon & you will serve as watchman. See that the
orphanage is adequate & that he returns to me once he finds himself a
man.
- Is that all? An honor as punishment?
- Yore only obligation, Hagar intone.
- You’re son will serve my daughter; he will need to be strong, Roman
looked at the little boy in the sunlight, see to it.
- That’s not too much to ask. Bloom answered.
- For attempted murder, I should think not. Roman rapped his cane once
on the harwood floor.
- Now tell us where he is. Hagar insisted.
- Bloom sighed, he is going home, to rest, certain both of you are
gone.
- And how can we take him by surprise?
- There’s a passage in the undercarriage of the amphitheater, it leads
below, to within thirty metres of the pyramid.
- We’ll have to put in an elevator one day.
- Indeed.
- They left Bloom & Powers alone in the dark, wooden study.

The Tunnel

The train plunged into darkness. Elena came into the cabin again.
- Could you believe the roar. She asked.
- It’s done? Illana remembered the sound of the gusts of flames at the
rear of the train.
- We’ve done it. Elena beamed.
- You concieved?
- I couldn’t be more certain.

Illana resented her glow, she was telling the truth.
- I couldn’t ask for a more capable sister, she said, thank you love.

Elena smiled and kissed her sister on the cheek before plopping down
happily on the redleather couch.
- And now for Larissa, I can’t wait, it’s been so long.
- Our child will be born there, as you and I and my brother before.
- I know, Elena’s mind was filled with possibilities, what shall we
call him.
Illana thought a moment and there it was.
- Call him Ismael.

**Hope**

Jona tracked the great white dragon as it wound through the deep crevasses below.
- Keep her in front of you or we lose her. Roman boomed from the helm above.

Jona narrowed his sight in the rear ball gun turret behind Hagar.

**Don’t Chase**

Hagar, Roman & Jona chase the great white out of the mountains.

**Birth**

Hagar & Roman have Jona at the Mance, they give him up to Bloom.

**The Chase**

Roman, Jona & Hagar stalk & persue the great white through the mountains, whizzing by the Mance into the open air over the delta & seaside.

**Larissa**

Illana&Elena reach Larissa the heir to the throne. The unch is waiting for them. He moves their bartolomew car & is otherwise silent. They mood is ominous. Time folds are weird here.

**The Stage**

Hagar & Roman concieve Illana on the stage in the dilapidate underground amphitheater. On their way to Emil in the underground palace.

**Hagar**

The trio harpoons the dragon & works to reel it in. The dragon gives slack & jerks back, flinging, sling-shotting Hagar into the open air oversea side. She dies with a church steeple through her back, staring at the sky.
That ridiculous knife you’re trying to make famous should cover it. She tried not to say it smiling & out of the side of her mouth.

Very well. Jona conceded. Objections if I do so with a flourish?

Oh please, indeed! The Gambler & Hagar agreed.

In an instant, Jona lofted the knife concealed in his on left hip with his right so it hovered a foot & a half above the table before freefall.

Without rising, his left hand flung over & plunged the kinch to just a bit past the felt through th tip of th wood. Pinning the captain’s dubloon to the center of the table.

Like Moby-Dick! The Gambler made his eyes big in comic astonishment and began laughing uproarious, drawing the other two in.

All three cheers’d the air.

Cheers to the air! Hagar took the lead.

Cheers to the air indeed! The men replied in unison.

We know you’re ready to set it after bigger game than mobsters, pimps & petty thieves. The Gambler intoned.

Aren’t we playing cards. Hagar said, brief leaning her face to the bar.

Ha-a, indeed, indeed, indeed. The Gambler’s jocular profundity returned. He flipped a final card face up from the deck to the table. The cord split on the blade & caught.

The card was framed with a Navy rectangle wrapped around alternating blue & white slight swirl. Printed squarely over the center of the vortex in warm, block, reassuring letters, somewhat akin to clouds, the card read,

**Illana**

The unlit elevator opened & Illana & Elena stepped backstage.

-What power of man can usurp the Law divine? Illana heard Powers thunder, overwrought onstage.

-The Law. Bloom assured, playing Creon from the throne, is.

Powers, as Hesiod, persisted, finishing the king’s argument, Without which man could not hope to percieve, achieve, or even conceieve...

Elena smiled, her favorite line, no matter how many times she’d heard it, Divinity.
Jona paused, quietly amused & checked his pockets for change, calling the lady’s wager with a couple quarters.

- Glorious! The Gambler rejoiced. Let’s play high card.

Giddili he pulled a deck of cards from a secret place inside his calvary-style, black & gold-trimmed, long captain’s jacket.

The non-playing side of the card was embossed with an intricate, semi-similar, labyrinthian pattern. Jona knew learning their nuances would render the cards transparent.

- Is everthing alright? Jona felt compelled to ask.
- Of course good man. The slender, bearded Gambler seem downright jocund.

Haga nodded, confirming to Jona the Gambler was honest angling for fun. Jona thought, this is a strange way to meet a powerful, dangerous, very-feared man.

- I understand you fulfilled my request on a flawless first attempt. The Gambler dealt them all cards & looked to his beautiful young assistant.

Hagar nodded, ageless. Jona studied the storied Captain’s face as he passed them out. His eyes betrayed nostalgia, but a flicker in his brow revealed he knew which cards were where, and where they would fall, it was beautiful.

- I’ll raise it a single golden dubloon. The captain slammed a glimmering gold coin onto the table.
- Fold. Hagar protested.
- Call.

Jona interrupted. Now, what’s a golden dubloon? He asked, meaning how much one was worth. Hagag folded Fortunes’ Wheel, The Recon King & thethreeofwords.

- You didn’t look at your cards, the Gambler protested.
- Didn’t need to, Hagar rose to make herself a drink, jameson, rocks.

The Gambler watched Jona watch Hagar.

She cut a line from the dish on the bar with a razorblade she’d concealed in her dress.

Hagar cleared a hearty line and took a long pull on both her smoke & the jameson.

She turned to Jona, and we could see a sudden supreme confidence flicker to life inside her.
- Antigone’s appeal, Powers embellished his voice with concern & earnestness.

- Provides a prism through which to view the primal anguish of our collective soul.

Bloom rolled his eyes.

- Overblown hotenpoche! Creon scoffed, that predates her cause indeed. Bloom intoned, dismissing Hesiod, Powers, from the stage.

Elena looked to him with questioning eyes. Illana moved closer to the spotlight.

- Let her be, Bloom, Creon, soliloquised.

- It’s electric, Powers reassured Elena, they’re with us, all the way. He firmly pressed his palm on & off again the small of her back before taking his place at Illana’s side.

- If I debase my reign, my rule, let it not be denying the honest grief of a daughter. May I never bear the tragic weight of her forbears, Bloom threw away the line, Creon rose from the stark, black-marble throne & resolved to centerstage.

- An elevated conscious is well-worth the price of Mercy.

- Let her quarreling brother find his rest & may this bitter sister live, secure in her redress. The king resigned, stage right.

- Perfect. Antigone thought. Illana, moved, now there frozen in position behind the crease in the subtle, closed curtain.

- This is beginning & end. An invisible chorus echoed across alcoves in the underground amphitheater.

The lights chimed & dimmed to just before blackness & rose again to an underwater blue; fog emanated through the wooden beams beneath their feet.
The smouldering, knee-high haze obtained a feint, fluoresense, the curtain broke twice her shoulder’s width.

Illana walked, indigant, calm, through the smoke to centerstage. She knelt by an anthill of ashes hidden in the iridescent cloud, patient, rising evermore.

- And the Cave will be my tomb, my brother’s ashes, inheritance. Antigone strode to the lip of the stage and let the ashes drizzle through her fingers to the orchestra chamber hidden below.

- A noble one indeed. And only Ismie will survive. Born into a shroud of fate no child should have to wear, hotenposche, she thought, The daughter of a fallen king, the last abomination. What a glorious echo indeed. The audience could feel a furie rise inside her, patient.

- And what of poor sister Antigone? She cursed.
- The fool who died refusing never broke her solemn vow. Another version of her voice emerged.

Antigone ridiculed herself from the invisible peanut gallery inside. Illiana insisted.

Antigone continued as one truly determined to pursue a particular plan of action, a very particular one.

- The only question. What can Antigone, daughter of Jocasta & Polynices’ sister accomplish in these final fleeting moments of her evil-fated life?

She flashed open her right hand, lighting overhand a vivid ball of fire.

- She could slowly starve herself, it flickered off her tongue, she muttered something, turning from the crowd.
- She could dangle & swell till she popped or suffocated a cleft or two inside this rocky ceiling. My robes could yeild plenty of binding.
She stepped to the red curtain, ghost-blue haze now rising to her waist, and extended her arms, flaunting the careful symmetry, simony, the drapery of her sleeve.

Her fingers rolled out, and another, now blue, burning orb, hovered perpendicular over the air inside her palm.

In a motion she lowered her arm & turned upstage, leaving the lavish costume in a lazy heap of fabric on the floor.

Thellipletic of her figure cut into the stage and forced open an irreplaceable breach in the theatre, the void cleaved shut to the cavernous space and opened again at once.

Antigone was waiting, formless, without shape.

- Or I can burn. She strode again to centerstage, resolute & ignomonomious. Illiana halted in the failing light, exposed.

- I can sear it. She said, I can sear it to my name, almost only, to herself. Antigone recollected, understanding.

- Then let it be, Illana let Antigone falter. A flicker of fear infected her quiet reslution, my humble apotheosis.

It broke again, and then...

Antigone’s piercing howl ignited into a billowing pillar of fire, bursts of bright heat and light shattered through the floorboards.

She was gone. Haze descended from the rafterless roof above the audience.

- Colorless, without font, on in, the chorus whispered.
- Did you hear about her father, another voice was heard.

Also, themomentsheemolated, a sigh swelled across the crowd. The sudden haze burned away again inaninstant.

Only folded robes & the pitiful ashpile remained.

Powers caught her almost silent & Elena covered her in a white, silk & linen robe at the base of a little safety valve below the stage.

The ladies performed another silly ritual, for the final time. Elena set her forehead & nose into Illana’s, she stared into endless eyes.

They held their breath a three-count,

Illana’s heart teetered, on the verge of collapse, her teeth crashed together, chattering, concerned.

And then it broke again, another feint;

A rising tide of stunned applause surged and pummeled and erupted into thunder evermore endless echos in echos, filling the underground space the undergound space.
Illana thought they were mocking her, she was convinced.

They love you, we love you, I love you, Eleana, reassure her.

The Fool

(the known whirled.)

Jona feigned a look at his cards & checked.

Oh, you know I love gambling. The Gambler was giddi again.

So I understand. Jona motioned to Hagar that he would like to have some of what she was having. Hagar happily obliged.

Let’s make a way. The Gambler said.

Hagar left Jona his drink & returned to the bar & the mirror.

If I turn the high card we’ll enjoy our night of revelry & you will depart tomorrow, a friend. The captive stays & you forget the rest of our arrangement.

Ok, I lose & you get your man, free. But then I’m a confidant, & you know how important you are.

Indeed, and never a question about the circumstances of our... company.

What do I care about Bloom?

My dealings with him go back further than you have been alive.

So it seams, said Jona, surprised by the Gambler’s candor.

So it seams, the Gambler repeated, turning over some unspoken ponderous thought. His fate hasn’t sealed itself et.

There needs to be a mild breather here, nothing important happened.

And if he wins. Hagar asked from the bar, sipping her whisky; Jona thought she had a feeling where the Gambler was going with this.

Just a little one, a minor break.

The possibility of acquiring an assistant. She’s private expressed a deep & sincere curiousness.

And you honor our original bargain as agreed? Jona suspected he was being swindled, or that the Gambler and Hagar thought they were futher ahead of him than they actually were, and all I get is an audition?

The Gambler underestimated him.

Proving compatible with her is an honest shot at the big leagues, permanence, real Freedom, and any fool can see thats what you think you’re pining after, winning her...

Call.
The Mance
Illiana & Elena & the hotenposche arrive at the Mance, a gothic two story modest mansion set into the shadows of the western wall of the mountain range, overlooking the delta, Seaside&theSea.

Re-encounter
Roman & Hagar slay Emil in a dilapidate throne room in the underground palace, a pyramid, the same place where Illana dressed before Antigone.

The Day of the Lord
A final attempt at salvaging the dragon turns fatal. The great white twists & clings to the bulk of the airship. It penetrates the hull with a sharp spike on her tail, and consumes the ship in a breath of fire. The explosion blacks out the setting sun. Illana & Elena look on with drinks&olives from the widow’s watch.

Passing
Many months later Illiana & Elena are sitting the the same places, viewing the full moon over seaside & the sea. Illana swaddles the infant Ismael. Elena has taken up smoking since the birth. A radio divulges the fate of the Stilgar, Hagar, Jona & Roman. Illana shoves Elena from the widow’s watch, she falls into the garden below, surrounded by gardenias, neck broken in two. Divinit
Airship!
"Fifteenth gave me an address, disguised dress-makers in Brooklyn."

"Bad neighborhood. Smelled of damp plaster and stained mattresses."

"Arrived there at dusk. No lights on in building."

"Something was making noise in wasteland at rear."

"Attack dogs. Two German shepherds, fighting over knob of bone. Didn't seem interested in me."

"Decided not to use rear entrance anyway."
When she was being honest with herself it was the experience with Jona that drove her Elise. When she was reevaluating what she thought was being honest with herself, she just preferred used to men, but still, that craziness with him was what drove her to where she needed to be. They were young, and she was cheating and he drove all the way across the city, Megalopolis to find her. She was fucking Nathan and it was fucking good when he barged in. He threw her favorite fucking lamp across the room and beat the hell out of Nathan. Jona was a big a guy, and fucking strong, and Nathan didn’t have a chance. She spit in his face like he had done so many time to her after his fury was mostly over and wept by Nathan, unconscious, but still very alive. She screamed that his cock was a thousand times better his and she knew that wasn’t true and she fucking hated that and she kicked the door shut so hard behind him that it folded in like a V before springing back to near it’s original shape and cried again on the mattress. He walked out all morose already feeling guilty, fucking asshole, mother fucking asshole, fuck him. She knew he would figure it out and she knew she fucking wanted him to and she hated herself for it but fuck it if there was one thing she was fucking absolutely certain of it was that Jona, that fucking asshole deserved it.

And now he was famous. A fucking celebrity sheriff in the most crime ridden district of the biggest city, Megalopolis, civilization had ever seen, and she was working in the erotica store, another failed fucking artist who wrote affirmations to keep herself going when she should have been painting or writing something that could make some money; but she needed it, and the affirmations were strong and true, and here she was fucking remembering that asshole again, seven mostly wasted years later. That piece of shit. Maybe he was better now, he wasn’t a bad guy, she hated that she knew that more than anything. She doubted he was good one too though.

Daphe was shaving her legs in the bathtub, she liked to watch her groom, it made her feel like a monkey, but fuck it, she was beautiful and it was still new and they were still so very much in love. Damn, why did she think about sex so much, and why did she feel like she shouldn’t? God, she was fucking beautiful; everything was good, she let her mind rest a minute and let a certain shade of bliss seep into her soul. There was nothing like contentment, and that’s just another word for happiness. Thank God Jona lost his fucking mind seven years ago; still, she wished she didn’t remember the date. One day it would fade, she prayed, thank you.

She was a little worried though. She kept bringing up polyamory in that jokey way someone does when they’re sincerely curious about something but want to make see like they aren’t but are actually just trying to let you know in the most comfortable way possible. It was an interesting thought, but Daphe could be naieve, she knew less about love, or at least what actually made relationships work, than she thought she did. Elise didn’t think it would work, but she knew Daphe liked to have a man around, she liked dick and a man, or the idea of a man, made her feel safe, she understood; and even though she still kinda did too, about a good dick at least, it just didn’t seem like something that would work, on a
practicle level. Fuck, why did she think so much about sex. Fuck it, back to being happy, so much for giving her mind a rest.

She needed to write and she needed to paint and she had been blessed with a beautiful muse for a partner; she wouldn’t be short on inspiration for the foreseeable future at least as far as Daphe was concerned, but she wanted to write about Jona, dammit. Oh well, that’s creativity for ya; it may not be what we want, but she couldn’t deny it was what she needed. She wondered if she could contrast how good he sex was with how terrible their relationship turned toward the end. She didn’t want to write erotica but she was certain she was supposed to write about sex, there was some literary way, fuck she was so full of herself she thought, to depict it with sincerity. She had to work it out on the page, she knew that, just a matter of getting started. Elise sat on the side of the tub. Daphe was almost done, working on her pussy, getting it just the way she liked; she smiled an gently, playfully, smiling, traced the edge of her partners faintly purple perfect circles with the tip of her ring finger till they stiffened a tad. She kissed, pecked, her partners nipple affectionately, then stared into vast depths of her partners gorgeous auburn eyes. She was happy again. They smiled and kissed. Daphe stared at Elise’s silohouette as she trotted out of the bathroom to in her underwear to dress for dinner. Wait a minute pretty lady, Daphne called out from the tub, Elise looked over her shoulder and flashed a lusty, raised eyebrow. Put it in my face. Daphne said in deliberate, rythmic stoccato. Ha! Elise put her face in her hands without turning around and laughed a moment longer. She stretched a leg back as far as it would go and in a few agonizingly slow reverse lunges she was standing right in front of Daphne, smiling, leaning forward, elbows wrapped around her knees. God I love it when you show off. Oh I know, she mussed up Daphne’s hair with a little love and bounced a bit on the balls of her feet. Oh no Lady! You’ve got a little bruise here. She poked Elise’s buttcheek with her ring finger. Kiss it make it better baby, Elise was giving her a similar look over her shoulder then bent down and touched her cute, stubby, blue-green toenails like she was stretching. God you’ve got a beautiful cunt, Daphne stated matter of fact before kissing, biting, and giving her an affectionate smack on the ass, go get dressed bitch, I fucking love you. She was feelin it & called out I wrove you two! in her favorite silly voice with a subtle justa tinge of cartooniness; strutting back across the tile into their little bedroom. She reminded herself Daphne had a story of her own. That gave her an idea. Should she ask, no, it would be ok, she picked up her phone by the bong on the dresser and texted Jake. Everything would be alright.

Like a Really Nice Bathroom in an Efficiency Apartment

Or like a really nice gesture and all

Daphe still had time, she knew it would annoy Elise, but she would forgive her, she always did, it was the kindness, that’s what made her fall in love; that and she was really fucking hot, like eerily her type, mentally and physically, all of her. She turned on the hot water to the highest as she could handle after swooshing the the little hairs down the drain. She turned on the jets to medium, alternating and let the bubbles cover her until just the tip of her exposed breasts were exposed above the steaming waterline and slowly she started touch herself. She didn’t always think about sex when she masturbated, she did at first, Elise’s outline in the doorway was enough for that, imagining the tug of her panties over the end of her adorable, squatty, cyan painted toenails, the taste and smell and the feel of how her tounge her
tounge would slide past the threshold where dry skin turned moist. Fuck, she wanted it to last, she let her mind drift into nostalgia, how they met. They were such barflies back then, Revolutions, their favorite, she still missed it every now and then. She pressed more firm, still slow. Fuck she was hot, and fuck she was lucky, she knew it. A little moan escaped her and she laughed thinking Elise probably heard, she hoped she did. She pressed further inside herself and let her other hand trace where it wanted across the underside of her breasts. She turned on a slow trickled of cold water to temper the heat, the steam was getting intense. She almost came and caught herself just before beautiful void. She thought about her Bible as literature class and the gold Warhol Rorschach test that looked like a slice of brain; writing or creating anything really is like leaving an imprint of your consciousness in the physical realm, for everyone to see; we speak to the dead in innumerable ways. Eternal life, the word was god. Genisis 1, the word created the world as far as being the medium through which we negotiate the boundary between the spiritual & material spectrum; a separate sacred space apart from our intellectual individual and collective consciousnesses then if we think of metempsychosis in different terms, like not so literal, like through interacting with the still living consciousnesses left behind in the reality we generally agree to accept; the personalities, the ideas we encounter... this is just a complicated way to say we are what we read she thought.

Sometimes fast was good, but tonight she wanted it slow, she needed it to last tonight, after dinner it would be real, unreal, bliss, her favorite, a blondie in bed, dessert. She pressed in further ready to finish, her back arched and she moaned again, muffling it was hopeless. Her mouth and eyes opened and she stared into total darkness at the tiled ceiling above the bathtub. The bathroom was dimly lit with candles and the mirror had totally fogged up. Their apartment was little but it was nice, the tub was definitely the best. Fuck that was amazing, her little tummy was still poking out above the waterline in the bubbles; Elises favorite part of her she always said. She settled back into subtle arch of the underwater porcelain. How did she come so hard, she still wasn't sure if she was crazy or just blessed with a vivid imagination. Oh well, win, win, she blushed at her own thought and sank below the surface once more before pulling the stopper with her elegant Egyptian toes another favorite feature, her partner always said. A surprise mani pedi tomorrow she thought, redwine, they had enough money for that.

She dried herself with her lucky purple towel in the wide floor to ceiling mirror. She wondered who the fuck put such an amazing bathroom in such a place, this was Tribeca for Christ's sake, nobody lived in Tribeca anymore. She finished up the last of moisture along the inline behind her knee, it tickled there, stared at herself in the mirror; she let her slender fingers trace the gentle lines of her nakedness. She never thought it would happen, but she finally truly loved the way she looked, fuck it took a long time to get there thought she thought. She looked down at herself a little longer and watched toes crinkle and spread on the plush, pink bathmat. Her nipples were rock fucking hard, fuck she loved her sex drive; she pinched them between both her ring fingers and palmed and tugged a little bit, giving herself a wide toothy grin in the mirror. Elise gently rapped her knuckles on the bathroom door, a loving reminder. She laughed to herself and slapped herself on the ass to get moving. Daphe let Elise's favorite black satin dress of hers, the one she hadn't in months, fall onto her angular shoulders like white clouds against a clear blue sky just before the softest April shower, nothing underneath nipples still long and stiff and poking into the softness of the black satin. What a silly simile she smiled. She couldn't decide between her light blue low top chucks or the minimalist, black leather, strappy heels. Heels first, mos def. She strapped them on on the little dark wood stool they used to reach the top of the closet. She
hope Elise wasn’t worried about her bringing up bringing in a man, she knew she noticed, and mostly she wanted someone they could use for sex, seriously, I know, but yeah, the idea made her feel safe too, and she doubted there was anyone who could handle them the way she would need him too anyways. She gave herself a passing sideways grin in the mirror behind the sink and checked her black leather clutch to make sure she had her phone. I just hope it didn’t hurt Elise, she whispered out loud to herself before opening the bathroom door. Steam ushered itself quietly out into the bedroom. Her partner was waiting on the sheetless and unframed mattress they had thrown against the back, two-toned bright green and purple wall. She was smiling happily, sideay, with her big, beautiful, doe-like eyes: red pastel low top chucks, black nike golf socks peeking out just below the hemline of her favorite pair of skinny jeans. Yes, her ass looks fucking great in those. She giggled, I love that fucking shirt. Elise was standing, nice and stacked in her lucky green cotton tee with the throwback Sprite logo that actually read Spirit on closer inspection. Elise mussed Daphes short, cropped, blue & purple and black hair until it looked something like stylized. Leave it out tonight babe, Daphe asked, I really love your hair. She laughed and agreed tossed her dark blue floral hijab back onto the dresser and kissed Daphe sweetly on the cheek. Daphe held the door for Elise and they left the efficiency, she watched her walk toward the mailboxes and payphone, reciever dangling inexplicably off the hook, more than a little lustfully through the stark and bright lit flourescent hallway out to where the sidewalk met the street beneath a black and cloudless sky and the towering facade of the Gwenis Antannae overhead. Elise smirked, looking up, is something wriggling up there? It was just a bit too far to make out what she could only faintly see. Daphe shrugged, maybe someone’s stuck up there. Ha! Elise grinned and gave her partner a big wet, happy with just the slightest edge of intense passion, kiss, leaving a bunch of her bright red lipstick intermingled with Daphes deep blue. They strolled, holding hands, across the strangely empty street. The cool breeze on such a humid night was reassuring. They looked fucking hot.