

They drink wine in silence. Then,

B

What's left in your routine before you sleep?

C

Singing. I sing through all the songs we've written. Just in case we need to dust one off. It usually takes 104 minutes, 68 if I skip through the instrumentals.

B

Smart. Practical.

C

What about you?

B

Abraham and I tell each other a story from our old life.

She looks at A, sleeping soundly.

C

From when you were alive?

B

Yes.

C

I never talk about that time. I always assume people don't want the reminder.

B

The reminder that we died? How could anybody avoid it? It's all around.

C

I sometimes forget it. When I'm singing, usually. I'll feel... purposeful. Like my life is going somewhere. I'll... I'll sometimes open my eyes and look at the back wall of the club, looking for, like, a record producer, who'll like, be impressed and give me a deal on the spot, you know? Like in the movies. I mean, I wasn't thinking it consciously. But I half-believed that I'm just at the beginning of something, instead of at the end.

B

That's beautiful, Cleo. That's good. Maybe you are. Maybe the Prince of Darkness will be your record producer. Maybe that's what you talked about, even? Are you hinting?

C looks down.

B

Hmm. That would be a nice one to believe.

They drink.

B

Abraham and I have not adapted well. Neither of us, I don't think, has for a moment forgotten our death. It is a sad thing, to be so caught to the past, to need to relive your life every night. Abraham does not think it is sad. He thinks it is important to remember what we are and what we were. He sees other people here, going about their days, living, and he is sad for them. He fears the second death, of forgetting... But it is late. He is asleep, but you are not. Would you join me, then? Tell me a story of your life, and I will tell you mine, then you will sing and we will sleep. We must still sleep.

C

A story about my life? Gosh, it's so hard to remember. I don't really... Oh, well, the only things I'm thinking of are kind of sad.

B

Then it is a sad story tonight. A happier story on a happier night.

C

Ok. Well. It was around a year before I died. I was in a dark place, those last few years. I remember thinking to myself, like, "man, I'm gonna look back and think that this is the low point. This is the valley." But in the end I just died, so it turned out that it wasn't a valley at all, it was just a cliff. Which is to say, I tried to kill myself at some point in there. I did it with pills. I was scared of violence at that point. And I regretted it. Pretty quickly, like within a couple minutes. Just, oh fuck, I fucked up super hard! So I called a fucking Uber. I had heard stories about people getting bankrupted by ambulance rides and stuff. I threw up, and this dude picks me up. He's one of the chatty drivers, asking me all sorts of questions, then like steamrolling my answers with talking about himself. I was pretty woozy at that point, I don't really remember how I responded. I must have made some lie about why I was going to the hospital. A while into the drive, I realized I'd accidentally gotten a shared ride by reflex, because he stopped to pick up this woman. She was beautiful and really drunk and wearing club clothing. She was really chatty, too. She kept touching my hair and telling me how much I looked like her sister. I don't remember a lot of the rest of that ride, I was really losing it. I do remember the driver talking about how he was training to be an EMT. I think I said, "Good thing you're driving the ambulance," before passing out. So I wake up in the hospital. My stomach's been pumped, I'm attached to machines. And I open my eyes and I see the two of them sitting in my room. They stayed. They were sitting in two chairs and chatting and laughing. And they were like holding hands. I guess they'd been

there for hours. So they'd started flirting. I'd guess it probably started out pretty somber, serious. Both of them carrying me in from the car. One of them saying they wanted to make sure I was ok, the other one, maybe not wanting to seem selfish, saying they'd stay too. Maybe they lied to the nurses, said they were friends. I imagine them sitting in silence, waiting. Eventually, she says, "she really does look like my sister." And they get talking about her family, and then about his family. And it turns out they have a lot in common. And maybe both of them were intending to leave at some point, but they're connecting. And he's talking about how he wants to save people's lives, and she thinks that that's so noble, and she's talking about her transgender sister, and how supportive of her she is, and he thinks that's so cool. And my actual memory is fuzzy, but I remember hearing her whisper, as I was waking up, "Oh my god, what are we going to tell our kids when they ask us where we met?" Giggling. In retrospect, I'm grateful. And amazed that they stayed. Waking up to the sound of laughter and love was so much better than waking up alone and sterile. But at the time, I couldn't feel anything at all, other than embarrassment. It was the most intense emotion I'd ever felt in my entire life. No exaggeration. Just pure humiliation. You know, like what a stupid fucking thing to do, you know? And so publicly. All these nurses, these two sweethearts, eventually my family and friends, they'd all know about what a stupid impulsive coward I was. Who inconvenienced their lives so profoundly. Just pure embarrassment. But these two angels, they came up to me when they noticed that I was awake, and they held my hands, and talked to me. And I wonder to what extent they were overplaying their kindness to impress each other. But ultimately, what's the difference? They were kind, is the important thing. And although I could barely look at them, that kindness did kind of break through to me. Broke through some of that numbness and humiliation. Even then, I think, though, I was 100% sure that they were gonna have sex that night. After leaving the hospital. Anyway. The funny part of the story, I guess, is a little bit over a year later. When I did kill myself, successfully this time. The EMTs that came to my house to try to resuscitate me, because my neighbor had heard the gunshot and called 911. He was one of the EMTs. I was adjusting to our new senses, the intense clarity, the shrinking of space, the fisheye, all that stuff. I was very disoriented, my first few minutes as a ghost. But I did recognize him. That same beard, and the earrings all up his ear, it was definitely him. He didn't recognize me immediately. My face was pretty messed up. But once they pronounced me dead he saw a picture on the wall, which had my face in it. And he recognized me then. The expression on his face... The noise he made, between a laugh, a sob, and a "hey!" He sat on the couch and stared at me while the cops examined me. The other EMT sat next to him, asked if he knew me. He shook his head, then nodded, then said, "She introduced me to my wife."

B

That's quite a beautiful story. A true one?

C

What? Of course! Why-

B

Not an accusation. It's a lovely story, and rhymes so well.

They sit in silence for a while.

C

They're having a kid. I found them, during my Wandering. I figured out where they lived, and she turned out to be pregnant. I haunted them for-

B

Hush. Now is not the time for stories of our deaths, but of our lives. That is for another time of day.

C

Ok.

B

Still, that is a funny coda. Your first suicide was a failure twice-over. You meant to take a life from the world, and added one instead.

C

Right? Yeah. So. Do you have a story?

B

I do. I was in second grade. It was December. There was a girl named Jesse. Two boys were singing that old rhyme, "Bristol and Jesse, sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G." I looked at her, thinking to ask if she might want to kiss. I was curious, and I figured, if everyone else already thought we were together, then there was no danger in trying. Well, she started crying and ran off. I didn't follow her. We were on gray asphalt, cold, subleached. I was wearing black shoes with white soles. The grass on the field to the west was brown and frosted, with patches of green ringing the football pitch. Beyond, a thin length of trees, a brick apartment building beyond. An abandoned backhoe by a pile of frozen bags of sod. The sky, unusually, empty of birds.

B falls silent, finishes her wine.

C

That's it?

B

Pedestrian memories are easy to forget. And it hurts when you realize they have disappeared.

C

I can't remember my mother's face.

B

Neither can I.

The wine is gone. C sighs.

C

I'm so tired.

B

Do you want to sing, still?

C

Ughh... I guess.

B

You may sing anywhere. I will be changing for bed.

B stands and stretches and takes off her robe. C watches. B pulls on sweatpants, not looking back. She gets into bed with A and looks at C, smiling slightly.

B

Not singing?

C is blushing.

C

I... I'm embarrassed. I've never... I was about to say that I've never sung in front of anyone before. Which is insane. But it's... It's different.

B

It's different. Please sing, though. I... Usually at night I have sex with Abraham and we fall asleep together. That is the daily ritual I am used to. I am less... fragile than he is, but the level of deviation from routine tonight has been... unsettling. So if you are able, I would be a part of your rituals. To feel the comfort of it by proxy. And I've always loved your voice. I never grow weary of hearing it.

C

I really like your voice, too. It's nice to hear it finally, it's very pretty.

They smile.

C

It's time for flirting now?

B

Yes, it's finally time for flirting. Will you sing for me, darling?

C thinks and nods and sings for 90 minutes. When she is done, B is asleep, and C settles down on the floor beside their bed and closes her eyes as well.