

Emily is a Diamond



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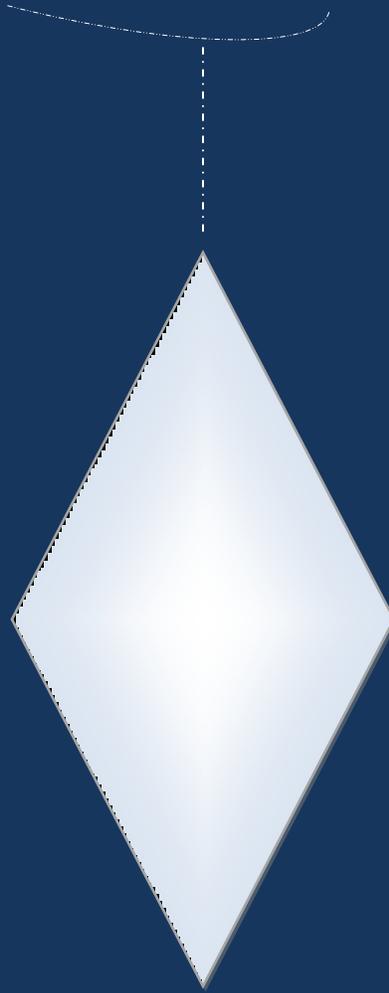
As from of old
a young tale
is told.

Sung to
diamond

and minted
in gold.

—A Tale Retold

Emily is a Diamond



1.

What will become
the sun.

It was black night. As the coke reigned down around us, a thick coating of Dickensian fog choking the new-born stray. Rivulets of steam battered the brazen door. Through which we seeped onto the sprawling scene far beneath the gray curtained veneer. Through a slit drawn back slightly the sidewalk slowly peeled upward. A hot blown breath sucked us in to the turmoil swirling overhead. We looked up dizzy and queasy with faint regard for the line of purple deities peering down their slippery slopes congested with hope and amber refrains.

It was the same as this a thousand times ago. The long thin yard curling away, huffing and puffing its fragrant bemoans as the still city ached perspective. Looking forward brought us back one too many times for a comforting sigh complacent on the wet-cut lawn, gaping and gagging a shrill remembrance.

It was dark for this disquietude. The leaves pressed their weight of steely stone well-worn hard to a thin bare point. Gold leaf trembled and twittered and the flakes hammocked redolently toward a tempered urn projecting askew from the brittle bark of sun-hewn clay constellated all around. Smells savaged armies arrayed to clamor and claw their way through caves of yawning regret. Not this time.

She or he wondered, and wandered, back and forth in stately rhythm to the barking shadows clinging to red-brick vines of delicate sage, where the length of an arm is a swallow's tale. What would they find?

It tapered as it meandered, climbing cataracts of white rain before losing itself in a tangerine maze. She couldn't see to think, or so he thought. It was like this once before—the chill giving it away deep in the cyanide haze.

She couldn't remember the way, which means she couldn't quite find herself in desperate throes to conceive. All alone now the trace of sandalwood on the chalky ground, where at last she might linger without cause, near where the sky hesitates, to catch a lately-earned swell of glittering mist drifting longingly by.

The sun never seemed so sharp. In Aztec array like icicles glistening in torrents of suspended descent perforating the canopy of her Pleistocene cave. She welcomed the prickly embrace, that tickled and teased till it cloyed. The day trumpeted its call to glacial luminosity. It was all too starkly bright for tentative human eyes.

Her skin was a cocoon, her soul secure in shrouds of fascia. How dare the world protrude! Each day's dawning violation sent her reeling.

She must have been running. Why else would her feet be caked in mud? The ground was damp with dew too thin for reflection. She must have run from far away. From far away to here, this sequined day.

She pictured skeins of lily-white smoke whispering sweet tresses.

Each day began violently so. She lived soft labyrinthine reveries, bleached unseemly.

2.

Do not show.

Do not show.

Do not show what it is we know.

The night of this first day came and went without a stir. No sounds haunted the thick foliage or recoiled from shallow shrubs inured to their entanglements. No way out meant no way in, she chanted as she lay untemptedly as chrysalis.

Could stirring trees be so benign? Could the wind comport with such earnest dishonesty? She would wait as long as patience could bear. And then decide, some way, some how, which way to turn.

Back and forth the sandalwood tree begged to differ.

She watched the sun crack the earth. How strange it seemed to threaten. She had felt whole, of a piece, coherently seamless. She hadn't once imagined anything less. Her very essence could only be one such singular thing, for her to be anything at all.

Or so she thought. Everything else came piecemeal, abutted together. How very good could this not be. The sap of trees their glue plated upon an iridescent ground.

The world such a sticky place—rivers and streams and torrents and trickles of caramel ice. Her head again swirled. What any god has put together can one day rip and ripple and eddy apart. But not, she prayed, her seamless self.

Try as she might she couldn't tear open her smoothly, quietly, seamless self.

She hoped past the hope of anyone else.

What came now too soon had come to late.

3.

She had never much counted clouds. Even as she lay prostrate on the vermillion veranda. But the music of clouds drummed in her ears. She winced at the thought of scallions at bay. Clouds clawed the sky that heartless day.

Twilight reared up in bitter time. The salty breeze chilled her spine, burnt open for shards of umber brick to chew upon at their incandescent leisure.

Once again she sleepwalked into the frenzy of the night, staged black for all to gawk and glare. Her home raged and buckled against the prolonged insistency of each incestuous needle. Was it enough that she consented to this fair earth? What more tell-tale tone could acquiescence take? Was there any portion left of what she most lived to give?

She felt her hair ride back, stoked to the fire of less temperate souls. Hers was the rage and ire of days, the lightening desire that shone the shy sun. Not this bright night of unrequited repentance.

As she lay against the darkening ground, she felt the lean promise of the pale parched moon.

How fitting that the moon of all creatures should rise her protectress. She had met her once, long ago now, stranded on a gnarled branch of byzantine bark. Her echo hollowed a path through sterling parterres all the way past each partitioning ridge. They were patterns of patience, to be sure. This comforted her, as nothing else would. Even as she stared blankly to the distantly bloated horizon. Would there ever be such a night again?

Would she ever be rescued, against fine lines of surreptitious brocades?

To this hard life she lived?

She fell backward at last, as a baton, and danced the solemn ground.

4.

Many such nights lay coiled before her. It was, after all, the message of days, as surely as there were stars to number.

She strained to think back past any such time. It was a different futility, she knew. The futility of ocean waves, she liked to think. This made her smile—ever the face of disjointed facades.

The park burned bright again. It was the tremulous glory of an inexhaustible heat. And brought her back to tales her father told, against a leaden sky flickering with salacious intent. Warnings that deftly skirted enunciation. Ideas slurred together in remissive contours. How her father preached. She hated the double-eyed vine, that it had come to this.

The corner life had beckoned once. And offered to dwell a satiating thirst. Once or twice too long ago.

Now there was little left of memory. What remained black and white jagged and awry. Fields were like this, looking down as birds of prey. Or so she could only imagine. What lies to keep in this splendid array! She suddenly felt full-throated at ease.

She had had to work so hard for this. Even at her ease.

She had always fought so very hard in challenging to please.

5.

Her body flexed origami. Angulated curves held tight to tented skin. She could surely harmonize to cajoling birds in stately diadems of practice. As once gingerly blowing silvery bubbles, she could surely learn. And guide to top the diaphanous art.

She could surely spin spiders' webs if all the world were skein.

With a little pinch of pain.

How many clouds had passed her by? Was this the way to count the seasons? As a young girl the seasons gathered tone and taste and every fleck of colored sky the sun refused to imbibe. Handfuls of pixeled paint cascaded down and around, swirling and collecting at her feet. She luxuriated in the rainbow palaces that arched between her fingertips.

If not clouds the summer rain blanketing consecrated rows of crinoline and ash.

These were the worlds her breath had borne, her eyelids patiently silently tapping.

6.

This was not the very first time the ocean surge took license with her toes. There must have been others. In foam and froth she endlessly floated. She often rose to the liquid moon and kissed its wan remembrance. She watched herself in its phases, and yearned to touch its moods.

Windows eyed and mirrored her, and she finger-painted what she saw—long bold strokes running round and round each place of simple safety.

She took a caesarian pose, catching the light of a chestnut tree. She couldn't trace her nose to the ground. Was this the scent of ambergris that drove her to distraction?

She ached for what she knew.

Searching for hardly-mined ore until the burden was rescinded, she stilled the meditating time.

7.

She pirouettes a serpentine line through rare stiletto air of apricot lime. The nearer to glow fragrantly so adamantine.

She rode a red ride that chaffed at her side, slippered and slivered in porcupine.

But the rock lay firm—stenciled to fine white alchemy.

As waves pressing shores it never seems to end. Might she this night burn through her husk? Might she this night toss and turn?

8.

She interludes conundrums and masquerades at play
sketched in a round-about way.

She cartwheeled to his bed. Gesturing totemically while hedge-
rowed high incendiary, he fled.

She thought she wed the time of day past midnight in her head.

9.

The sun burst through its burnt-orange rind, riddling her.

10.

Pyramids inverted to a neighboring star enveloped her. Sapphire beads zip-lined askew, then coruscated ecstatically skyward, again and again in delirious cadence.

“Am I alive and well, or dead and done, deliquescent under a beleaguered sun?

Am I one, or some, or none? Was I ever here, or am I still to come?

Was I always doomed to be undone, unlikely born to an unlucky sun? Or is life the death of everyone?”

Then pearls streamed down, and caught her all around. As soon she would be found, sodden through the glassy ground.

11.

The sparkle in her eyes will not surrender. She tumbled away from the bespangled lyre, so hard to gain a foothold. Better to spin broad circles in the alabaster sand, than to risk a benumbing patter. Her hands bore the impress first, then lightly paused to plie.

She couldn't remember a time before. She couldn't remember.

12.

Once upon a golden time a turntable spiraled away, trailing silk harmonies melodiously woven.

She could almost inhale, almost reach out across a cadmium sky and grasp a comet's breath. She came so close to pledge this long-sought silence. She came so close to break her heart.

Candy rhyme recited a sugary story, she heard in her mother's aquiline whisper. A rare cocoa mosaic filled the space just beyond her concentrated brow. The tip of her tongue begged it be left alone. Begged beyond repair. It didn't have to be this way, she heard herself ask, as if it were a question. Sometimes answers weighed too deeply, weighed too much in her bare time.

She could hardly conceive the force beating blood into a pencil's heart. Hardly conceive the urgency to extenuate her soul.

She heard operatic choruses braying to the night. And then, in the after-fuse of magnesium embers, everything in decrescendo ominously gray. The smooth-hewn cemetery spilled its stone dessert. She stood stupefied, in pale reflection, across the open room. She could bravely discern her mirrored features enflaming the smoky parade.

Her eyes burned and churned an imaginary acquiescence.

Again she felt her fingers drumming. She turned in her mind toward the door ajar. Held her breath in cellophane silence. And waited.

13.

1 2 3 4 might secure an anxious door;
5 6 7 8 might abate Orion's fate,
she curtsied to the sky.

Before she thought the better not to lie.

14.

Somewhere in or near the vicinity of her uncertain extremity, the faintest, frailest, briefest tremor of a twinkle, more felt than seen, more imagined than felt, flitted in and out of her awareness. And just as suddenly stole away, without trace or premonition. Exactly the type of inconsequence alighting without rhyme or reason all the timeless times before any world anywhere erupted. Then, after an interminable cessation, a second—or not. And nothing.

15.

How long she lingered in this dark desuetude no one can say, she least of all. For a spell she tried to crack a rhythm, gauge a pulse to time. Not presuming to hallucinate a watchmaker's sleight of hand, she tethered a rock to her mind's eye.

For a spell it pendently struck moments, until she went blind.

16.

It may have been her index finger. Or ring. Which, and which hand? She wondered hopelessly how to decide. Some things, she guessed, were boldly and freshly beyond determination. As land and moons and unimaginable stars. And then, as something—a notion?—was descending, all at once she lost her way among shear walls of Tudor gray—a hurriedly drawn prismatic display of which she could not say. Until something squinted the gray away.

It may have been her index, or ring, or some other finger from some other hand. It didn't matter. But the tip of the nail, the far rim of circumference, glittered and glistened in the stark, unseemly, unyieldingly starless and moonless night.

Then, just as quickly, inside and out, the gray again became her.

17.

Some piece of her steadied on the horizon. Some number of things seemed to wobble or spin or summersault in the cantilevered air cumulus in discontent. She couldn't tell what they were in unholy visitation. She had read too many books. Or slept too many nights to know.

She felt or feared she was losing her mind. How else to explain the rest of her, where all of her had gone?

She smelled horror at her edges creeping up her seams. She didn't stop to consider its meaning, too stunned to bleed cold tears.

Then she stumbled and fell head over heels, falling and falling and falling and falling.

18.

Light-ribboned rondelles scratched the cinnamon dawn by avocets
unsung in unease.

Which she would not see. She rotated her mind oppositely,
unresisting the revolving vortex full-voiced as a harmonica
nestled at its core. Its words spoke sounds she refused to hear to
intercession . . .

She winced.

Sharp. Hard.

Again.

Again.

Again.

19.

At once the weight of things pressed and crushed her pride to thumbnails of regret. Cut firmly layered revelatory away.

Her faceted body shone clear-white glistenings. Lucent tones sang her diadems. She breathed as she felt through and through the pellucid and still adamantine candescence of diamond. Become fittingly finally enduringly whole in lambent light that sheds no shadow.

20.

The moist constellated field rushed to anoint this decedent night with tears in her eyes.

21.

Come see Emily.

As one day the sun will become.

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