

# Heathcliff of the Penthouse

by [Evelyn Hooven](#) (August 2023)



*Self Portrait with a Wine Bottle*, Edvard Munch, 1906

A year to the day  
I felt, said  
She's gone  
Nothing consoles me.  
Fiancée was assumed  
To be wife,

Her elopement, death.  
I didn't contradict  
I was enclosed  
In elegy. I chose  
Silence, ease.  
Time passed.

Women seemed drawn  
To my grief  
My penthouse  
Even my reticence.  
They tended to stay.  
Dinner, opera, bed.  
Late night or just  
Past breakfast,  
My doorman  
Calls a taxi.  
This becomes a routine.

I'd been left Deeply hurt  
Needed defences  
Was relieved to be numb.  
I didn't consider  
Renewal  
The Sleeping Beauty  
Is never a man.  
Surely not me.

Being a mourner  
Worked well  
For what I still call  
Courtship.  
Was I drifting  
Into the role  
Of eligible  
Bachelor  
Who can't commit?

I don't think I harmed  
Anyone. I never  
Considered  
The danger of  
Amour (or armor).

Sometimes I sensed  
The border  
Of ridiculous  
I'm not sure  
If I could love  
This woman  
But how I love  
My escape route  
My options  
No strings, not one.  
Time passes.

She lived not far away.  
Our first evening  
I didn't feel  
Quite well enough  
For the opera,  
Nothing urgent.  
"Please take the tickets."  
She didn't decline  
With, "I wouldn't  
Dream of it."

Could she help in some way?  
When she couldn't, she said  
She'd come by later.  
Then left. Later  
Special thanks  
Rigoletto's a favorite.  
Also, before the show

She held up one ticket  
Someone took it  
Pressed these bills  
Into her hand. Here.

She dined on her own  
Not where I said, "Charge it."  
The restaurateur  
Will know what to do."

She had to leave right  
Away, needed an early start.  
I believed her  
She seemed to mean  
What she said  
Say what she meant.  
She assumed I'd do the same.  
This felt surprising,  
So was her way of parting  
Next day when she brought

Coffee. "I think you're tired.  
But you'll be all right  
Heathcliff of the Penthouse—"  
As though she knew what  
She could not  
Have known. I felt—  
Nowhere to go but  
Towards the unfamiliar

Or the sent away  
A song I thought  
I had forgotten  
Perhaps made myself forget.  
A Jacques Brel song  
O Mareek, Mareek  
Your love alone

The day \_\_\_\_\_  
It wasn't about  
Anyone I'd known.  
It was feeling, itself,  
Trying to return  
Fringed with something  
Towards bravery.

I'll invite her  
Hope to get to know her  
Slowly, hope she'll  
Turn towards me.

Maybe this is happening  
Because it's ready  
To happen.  
Yet it feels close kin  
To what people mean  
When they say,  
"I met someone."

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**Evelyn Hooven** graduated from Mount Holyoke College and received her M.A. from Yale University, where she also studied at The Yale School of Drama. A member of the Dramatists' Guild, she has had presentations of her verse dramas at several theatrical venues, including *The Maxwell Anderson Playwrights Series* in Greenwich, CT (after a state-wide competition) and *The Poet's Theatre* in Cambridge, MA (result of a national competition). Her poems and translations from the French and Spanish have appeared in *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, *ART TIMES*, *Chelsea*, *The Literary Review*, *THE SHOp: A Magazine of Poetry* (in Ireland), *The Tribeca*

*Poetry Review*, *Vallum* (in Montreal), and other journals, and her literary criticism in Oxford University's *Essays in Criticism*.

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