

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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