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Romance

Inside the golden palace of a home
two Swananas perform their dance.

Diamonds shower sparks
of light from collars
around elongated
necks as they swirl and twirl
en pointe to the music of ballets past.

The only point of contact:
purple and white
wings spread
open, shyly grazing
as the tempo
of the flutes picks up speed.

Lost in steps and notes
they start at the sound of trumpets
that signal the end.

Wings touch for the last time,
and papier-mâché feathers settle
back into place as they
struggle to slow their breaths
and still their cellophane wrapped
candy hearts.

Don't Look

Lost in thought, I didn't see
the Enderman until I was less than
five yards from it. Immediately,
I lowered my gaze; tried not to stare.

It hates it when you stare.

But it is so hard to *not* look at—
burnt black, purple smoke rising
from stick thin limbs.

Trembling, I watched its feet move
closer to mine. The smell of sulfur burned
my nose and made my eyes water. It stopped
less than a foot away and stood
there. I wanted to take a step back, to turn
and run to my house, slide the bolt in the door
through the raspy metal lock, and hide
under the comforter while my father yelled
at me for being late.

I didn't move.

I could hear my heart pulsing, beating
my ear drum. Puffs of purple smoke drift
towards me, disappearing as my ragged breaths
hit them. I squeezed my eyes when I felt
its fingers brush through my hair leaving
my skin and nerves tingling
where the smoothness of skin
met mine.

It sighed.

My eyes flew open; the feet were gone. I looked
up, surprised to see only green bushes and grazing
sheep.

Rapture Can Become Your City As Well

“Where the artist would not fear the censor.
Where the scientist would not be bound by petty morality.
Where the great would not be constrained by the small.”
-Andrew Ryan, *Bioshock*

The reflection of the red neon sign
off the surrounding water resembles couples
dancing the way they were supposed to dance
on a night like tonight.
Happy New Year 1959 it blinks,
winking to the broken champagne glasses
and overturned chairs that litter
the glossy wooden floor.

The white icing of the uneaten cake glows
like snow in the low light.
The destruction of the room
hasn't touched its flawless tiers, unmarred
by tiny fingers too eager for dessert.

Propaganda posters denounce the parasites
and advertise ADAM as “Evolution in a Bottle”
and EVE as the “best for our discerning customers”
wave from the art deco style hall walls
where they hang, half torn by careless hands
in haste as the party fled for their lives.

Among the upset tables, fallen
confetti and torn, fluttering streamers,
Angels lay where they have fallen—
the masks they wore for the masquerade
covering their wide eyes and silent screams
as they wait for the Sisters to come.

It wasn't always like this,
Andrew Ryan created the city
as a sanctuary where "the artist
would not fear the censor, where the scientist
would not be bound by petty morality, where the great
would not be constrained by the small."
He promised that by the "sweat of your brow
Rapture could become your city as well."

The large, golden bust of Ryan
at the entrance of the great,
underwater city proudly displays
a red banner inscribed with the slogan,
that was once sold to potential inhabitants,
"No Gods or Kings. Only Man."
became the admission of guilt.