WILD HORSES OF MOURNING

I’m looking for someone — a receding form:

Less a need for air than room to move, he left the apartment for streets that expand on the horizon: multiple vanishing points, wooden struts. Leather sticks to my forearms while my heart, leaving the hug of lungs, rises up my throat. A flightless bird, a blur of static caught in quick glide. Clinging to stucco, the click of boots: a descent.
A city is also an extended plane in the way streets move,
in the way bodies move through cities where neon lights mask subtler intentions. What do I remember? Pressed coffee through cheesecloth. The way he exits buildings. Words spoken through walls. A note. A node. But “this isn’t a conversation,” I say to the brocade. “It’s a game of marks.” His words made Xs across the whitewash, and mine, small like cuneiform. The rise and fall of breath scratched into plaster smudged by the feet of black flies.
Sometimes, stairways end in water.
I imagine grey ashes, contours of a face, how the photographer used filters of resonant reds and dark blues, intensifying his sides and multiplying. Likewise, architecture returns to its constituent parts: mud, dust, fibers, colorful piles.
The intensity of sunlight through venetian blinds
I sit, looking back. Beige, a stain on the morning, soaks into my arm. Thin ridges cross until a thicket wraps me, eyes toward the door. And through the door, a form against a park bench. Rising from the dunes, a live oak. Motionless, its bark etches a rough silence.
But where did these roads lead, ending in pale sand?
Figures line the dunes under a row of palms. Along the edge, drifts hold the streetlights distant. There, soil is more complex than sand where a mound’s rise elicits firm skin, an arc of spine. One could imagine the cool of a hill dragged over them, our houses, ordinary piles and bits of upright stationery, immersed, like wet roots, in between clenched toes.
Turning, I lift a foot
and walk toward the shore along the saw palmetto: figures stand with wild horses, holding reins invisible, each arm ending in a fist. Darker forms stand in the oaks’ shade, folding in the heat. The sun makes the land swirl, a slight tug to the left, vertigo, a polarized shine. Below the beach a floor emerges, terrazzo — pale yellow and mauve — while sand, a dull beige, forms piles that lengthen toward broken oyster shells used frequently in local architecture. Cement pools fill with seawater.
I open the door to catch a breeze.
Bodies lounge around the pool, now covered by beach-tea croton. The sound of waves, silent. Higher up, a fleck of clouds imitates the low tones of a sandstorm’s approach. Slanting, the ground ebbs toward the call of waterfowl and salt collecting along the tips of Spanish moss.
Under oak, palmetto. In the dunes, wild horses. The figures are there, children in the way waves splash their feet and the glisten of palomino skin. On return, the figures remain, though the horses are now dark bay.
My head against hot leather.
I kick sand to expose the floor underneath: here, mauve mixed with pale yellow. Who else loves the way stones polish beneath the soil? And the pools now empty. Low tide. Oak branches lower. Armadillos rustle sea oats along the eastern shore. Sand fleas crawl from tiny cuts in the ground. I find a trunk to lean against, bark coming off in small clumps where my hands, in reaching, rip. Breathing in short bursts, I lean toward sunlight coming through the canopy in jagged lines among the palms.
My hands, a hot wall.
Light serrates through palmetto. In the shade, movements along the beach become hazy, oversaturated.
The expanse spaced fitfully with trees,
there is touch. I see him lie in the dunes. The cord-grass near his head oddly motionless. The only movement along the shore, a sandpiper sucking the soil. “It’s not soil,” he says, seeing himself there: a mound, some grass, and a grey expanse that slashes the horizon.
With each turn another copse in view.
Pushed against the wall.
A breezeway.
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And so, he leaves: his form down the metal stairs, the clank of boots. I remember the tips of steel along my back. I see a small, wet-footed child, a motionless figure on the edge of the haze. Its fingertips dip below the shore. I notice bodies waiting in the dunes and scattered clumps of cord-grass, lounging under oak near pools filling with saltwater. I watch the way light shifts as streets end in sand and know that under waves: terrazzo—mauve and pale yellow.