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Rough Trade

I found the secret to life, revealed
by my master and the sciences: blood,
carrying vitality from fly to moth to bird
to cat, damnably quick as they are.

Insurance ran out, phone cut off, waiting
for him to call me through the aether, appear
in the mist beside the river where I sleep.
During the day I have the library, to study

the alignment of the veins, to post ads,
discreet, for those who like the needle and blade.
The nice doctor got me on PreP, though it
won't matter when I ascend to sit by

his left hand, the place of the faithful
servant. But it is new and we don't know
if he could sicken, so I take my meds,
make friends at the clinic with twinkles bearing

telltale scars. They are ecstasy, for a time.
They do not scratch. My greedy lapping
turns some of them on. They slip me cash,
drugs I'll trade later, since I must not offer

him less than purest vintage. He says pot
tastes of mold, speed like electric bananas
and hot metal, the antipsychotics I stopped
like wet flour and electricity. I long to develop

my palate: I only taste copper, smell
adrenaline sweat. I am very good at stitching
my boys back together when I am overeager,
though I try to maintain control.

I do not want to be like the writhing wives
lost to bloodlust and desire, no thoughts
but eating and exulting. The love between men,
said the ancient philosophers, is best in life,

though I wonder what they disguised under
effusive praise of reason and equals.
Mina is no mindless bride, after all, and I know
she holds his heart in thrall as he holds me,

without a drop of red passed between them.
Eternity is long and the master's house
has rooms and table settings sufficient for
three times as many. I wish he would call

for me. I feel him too far, and I ache.
I tell the rats earnestly all the news, to bear back
to where he scurries unseen at his leisure.
They know I never harm them, remove the cats

that wander too near the water; they are thankful,
as me to him, the promise of more life powerful
even lacking eternity. They nestle with me
when the wind blows cold, blanket me

warm as a well-loved infant, their tails squirming
kisses on my skin. I free their kings
with clever fingers. Word spreads until
I have a den of servants, furry facsimiles

of my thralls to come, who bring me food
but not my friend, who has surely not forgotten
his most faithful acolyte. I bring a boy,
barely a man and blue with cold, to my burrow.

When he is done screaming he sees how
they do not bite or scratch, joins me under
the living duvet, lets me bite his tongue
until his life flows down my throat and

his cries are begging for more in joy,
writhing against me in the warm dark as I
drink all of him, content to wait here
for my ascension, for his coming.