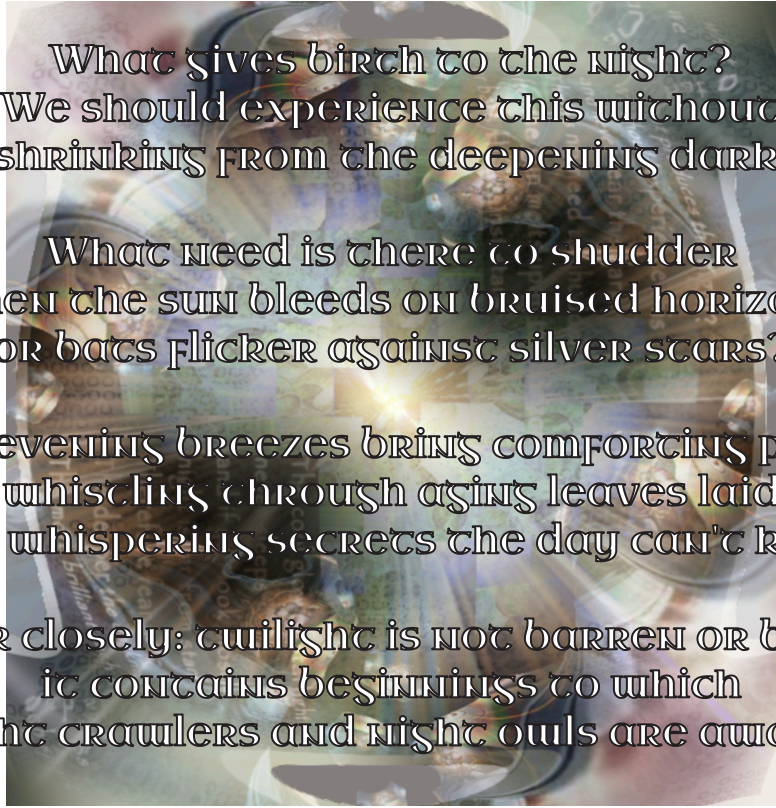


NIGHT SONG:

A nocturnal reverie in honor of Rainer Maria Rilke



What gives birth to the night?
We should experience this without
shrinking from the deepening dark.

What need is there to shudder
when the sun bleeds on bruised horizons
or bats flicker against silver stars?

Cool evening breezes bring comforting peace,
while whistling through aging leaves laid deep,
and whispering secrets the day can't keep.

Look closely: twilight is not barren or bare;
it contains beginnings to which
night crawlers and night owls are aware.

The poem's final line lingered in the cool air of Andrei's veranda, where the group had gathered as the last vestiges of day bled into an indigo night. The distant hum of crickets provided a mesmerizing rhythmic backdrop to their thoughts.

Andrei leaned against the wooden railing, his face partially obscured by deepening shadows. He let out a long, slow breath, with a posture invited relaxation. "It's about surrender, isn't it?" he mused, his voice dropping to a low rumble. "We spend our lives building walls of artificial light, terrified of what we can't see. But Rilke... he would have told us that the dark is just another kind of home."

Elijah nodded languidly, his eyes fixed on the first faint glimmer of the moon rising in the east. He reached out as if to catch the cooling breeze. "Exactly. We treat the night like a void— a 'nothingness'—but look at it. It's teeming. The air is more alive now than it was at noon. You only see the true depth of the universe when the sun stops shouting at you."

For once, Jules said nothing immediately. He turned his wineglass slowly, watching candlelight ripple along its curved edge, the deep red liquid catching and releasing glints of gold. When he finally spoke, his voice had shed its usual sparkle.

"In daylight, light seems to swallow everything. But here..." He glanced at the candle between them, its flame trembling but unbroken. "In this velvet weight of night, a single match seems like a fallen star." A faint smile touched his mouth. "Maybe we need the shadows just to recognize how luminous we already are."

Ellesha wrapped her shawl tighter around her shoulders, a soft smile touching her lips as she watched a bat dart across the moon's pale disc. "It's a beautiful paradox," she added softly. "The darkness doesn't swallow the light; it provides the only canvas where the light can truly be seen." Smiling at the paradox, she added, "Without night, light would have nothing to say."

– T Newfields

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