

Anything Again

by Claire King

Poised precisely at her table for one, she is immaculately groomed, her sunglasses by Chanel.

The waiter brings six oysters on a bed of crushed ice, placing them before her with an unwelcome flourish.

Minutes pass. Finally she lifts one shell, sips a little, then swallows the creature whole. As its saltiness slides down her throat she inhales its sulphur breeze. Like the last time her bare toes touched down on sand. When coastal gales blew hair across her smile and the horizon was wide.

The waiter brings toasted focaccia, piled with sautéed chanterelles.

She leans into the rising steam, turns the plate slowly - once, twice - then spears the mushrooms on silver tines and touches them to barely-parted lips. It is in her mouth again, the peaty earth where she buried her face the last time she was by his side. When they lifted her away screaming so the void could be filled before dark.

The waiter brings chocolate tart, glossy, almost black, perfectly central on oversized porcelain.

Someone once told her chocolate is addictive. That the physical pleasure from its chemical rush is like falling in love, like orgasm, like bliss. She pushes the spoon into her mouth and waits to feel anything again.

