Because the night

by Peter DeWolf

I glance back over my shoulder as you fumble with the keys.

Repeatedly.

You swear a little under your breath.

You finally locate the proper one and the large door swings open. I hold it as you run over to the alarm keypad.

You punch in the code written on a piece of paper by a friend whose favour debts outweighed her misgivings. Barely.

The beep of success makes you grin.

And it makes you drag me by the arm into the darkened back room of the library.

“This is your favourite place?” I ask.

You nod excitedly as you disappear from sight.

The blackness makes the silence overwhelming.

Heavy.

I follow your breathing. And the smell of your cinnamon gum.

We make our way out into the main section. There is a bit more light here.

You take a deep breath.

I stand beside you.

“The last time I brought a boy here, I was five and he pulled on my pigtails.”

“Crap. That was going to be my go-to move.”

I place my hand on your lower back to say, “I know it's a big deal.”

You smile to say, “You better.”

You lead. I follow.

We get into an elevator.

The doors close.

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The doors open on the third floor.

We exit.

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“… and I was eleven when my mom asked me why I like it here so much. I told her it's because I can hear the poets' souls dancing.”

“That's amazing,” I say.

“Yeah, I'm pretty great.”

You make a beeline for a shelf. You read the names like you're greeting old friends.

I wander over. My eyes now adjusting to the low light, I skim along without paying too much attention.

You step in between me and the shelf. I smell your hair.

“Here.”

You pull a book and turn.

I don't think you realize how close we are.

Your chest is almost against me.

Our eyes meet, frozen in a moment I've been trying to create all night.

I ever so barely begin to lean in.

“Basil Bunting,” you say, pushing a book into my hand.

“What?”

You spin away.

“Poetry? It's a hobby / I run model trains,” you say as you disappear around the end of the stacks.

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You're gingerly turning the pages of an old book. I lean against a shelf and check out ol' Basil.

“We can't, you know,” you whisper.

“I don't know that at all.”

I take a step towards you.

“She has dibs.”

“What?” I ask.

“She does. Dibs.”

“I'm not the last piece of pizza.”

“But when I hear of the brotherhood of lovers, how it was with them…”

“Walt Whitman,” I reply.

You smile.

You pass me the book.

You walk away.

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“Just the first two lines,” I confirm with you, across the table.

You look up from the notepad you're tapping your pen on and nod.

“Okay…”

I jot. Then scratch. Then jot.

You put your pen down.

We exchange pads.

I read yours.

i wonder from time to time to time if i could ever/ get back to the me i was before i was me and you

“I like that,” I tell you.

You smile, while already re-writing it in your head.

You read mine.

You may be a maneater / but I'm a lot to swallow

You look at me.

I'm not yet fluent in what is written on your face.

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You're sitting, cross-legged on the top of the table. I'm sitting on a chair with my feet up.

There are books piled everywhere around us.

“She met you first.”

I look up from my book and shrug.

“That's important,” you say, in hopes it'll convince one of us.

“I don't care.”

“She wants you.”

“And what about what I want?”

“What do you want?” you ask, joining me in allowing cheesy dialog to get us to where we want to be.

I stand up.

I lean in and put my hands on your bare knees. I slide them up a little, just under the hem of your dress.

You watch me watching my hands.

You uncross your legs.

I pull you over to the edge of the table.
You put your legs around my waist.

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We exit from where we came in.
The night's a little older now. More knowing.
I look skyward, in search of stars. Always.
“Don't worry, Magellan, I know the way,” you assure.
We head up the middle of the side street.
The echoes of our footsteps fall into sync.
The backs of our hands rub a little as we walk.