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As She Was

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As She Was

She was planted in Germany, rooted in Italy, pollinated in France and Spain, bloomed in Michigan, and watered in Albany. You would see her among tireless streets. Chasing colorless tongues and frozen teeth. She came quietly into the night—as if her tactile deftness was detrimental to her form. Ripping words from the mouths of the people she breathed in, twisting them to satiate her own roots and blossom her flowers. She ensnared dialects and lilting words in the freckles on her arms, lapped up the words she tasted in the rain and let them bathe in her mouth—frothing to her unsung beat. Rolling her *Rs* and whisking her crimson midnight hair, she floated past streetlights and oceans and crosswalks, delighting herself in the dipping of her toes into the flowing asphalt. Her eyes would dance with untold memories, languages she once enchanted, and the passport stamps reeling under her skin—confidently modest of the callouses she'd obtained. Her hips had born a life of sun and storms, of monsters and magnificence, of futility and fascination. Seldom fearing time, but rather letting the painted laugh lines seep into her softened skin. Rapturous in the way she presented her pain. Mesmerizing in the way she stood. She had words for blood, dripping letters where she lay. She drank songs from the moonlight, welcoming the night to strengthen her fingertips, rather than chip bone from her back. As her leaves turned blood orange, you'd see her pressing her petals into the curls of her daughters' hair. She leeches the words that sustained her to plant on the teeth of her babies, watching their new stems sprout—watering them as the world watered her. Her life had become a blazing autumn, while her children flourished in spring. Tending to her ardent garden, between chewed cigarettes and crackling arthritic leaves, you'd hear her rasp a laugh. "You girls won't really know me."