

Rosalba

the name
means rose at dawn
budding rose at sunup
innocent gentle rose
fresh like a baby
Rosalba
every cliché ever written
splitting the rising fireball
like fact
her name Rosalba
in the diaries
(Ros-al-ba says Nabokov)
twenty-six years of journals
the one I happened to pluck
after you left
our daughters
and your things for me to pack
ever loyal like sunrise
the diary from the year we fell in love
our month January
her name Rosalba
February Rosalba
wintry lovemaking with Rosalba
Rosalba evenings in your apartment
keeping her promise to wear nothing
under her tiny-waisted skirt
the same day of our own naked hours
steamy in Rosalba's parked car along the Arno
disfigured moon in eddies

Rosalba when I met your grandmother
then Rosalba in spring
through puffs of pollen from cypress trees
framing the cemetery on the hill
where we'd bury your father twenty-three Mays later
Rosalba at midnight
Rosalba when you'd charmed my parents
earlier that afternoon
a birthday visit to Italy and to get to know you
soft sex
the diary reads
with Rosalba
words she whispered in your ear
gifts you exchanged
Rosalba at dawn
when she crept away from her young son
and troubled marriage
daytime hours she stole from work and motherhood
would I satisfy you enough
you ask dutiful pages
were my tits the ones you wanted or
maybe their size didn't meet your needs
you wonder on the train platform
outwardly bidding me a loving farewell
after our week together by the sea
would I truly know how to gratify
your rightful appetite
like Rosalba
the diary echoes your uncertainty
blameless and inquisitive before a new day
like a newborn rose

there's no remorse or shame
at most you wink into your dear diary
at the close calls when I showed up unannounced
Rosalba had just come
from the beginning I was meant to serve you
through summer dawns
Rosalba
those weeks I doubted in Assisi
seat of your undeserved namesake
when you came to visit and cast your spell anew
plans to be with Rosalba in Florence littering the diary
as you flashed a vulnerable card from inside
your deceitful pocket
in the city of Saint Francis
everlasting Rosalba
as I began addressing your parents with "tu"
the familiar
Sunday lunches at their table
and later that night Rosalba
Rosalba as I learned your family tree
Rosalba through the changing leaves
as the vite americana turned crimson in Chianti
your father naming for me every tool
collected above the open fireplace
in the centuries-old house
daybreaks we spent there as I trusted
my heart to you
Rosalba in the wings
waiting in lace and boots
to fuck you when we got back to town
Rosalba as dawns became crisp with frost

as I let you in and in
Rosalba
petals falling open inside my chest

Rosalba
as I loved you
as I fell in love with our future together
Rosalba
as your union coursed in parallel

Rosalba
as she and you wanted
a baby together
Rosalba è finalmente incinta
Rosalba is finally pregnant
reads the faithful diary