Beneath A Moonless Sky

by lupwned

Summary

I stole to your side
Tormented by my choice
I couldn't see your face
Yet trembled at your voice

And I held you
And I touched you
And embraced you
And I felt you

And with every breath and every sigh
I felt no longer scared
I felt no longer shy
At last our feelings bared
Beneath a moonless sky

~ "Beneath A Moonless Sky"; Love Never Dies

Post Oak Room.

When Carol first sees Therese – standing several feet away – it's as though she is a ghost. The dim lights make her pale skin glow and the cigarette smoke wisps around her, making Therese appear almost ethereal; it be fitting, having likened the young woman to an angel many times over the course of their affair.

- COMPLETE -
Chapter 1

The Oak Room is hazy with smoke and low-orange tinted light. Carol flicks the end of her cigarette into the ashtray at the center of the table and listens to her colleagues' stories, feigning interest with a laugh and a smile. Occasionally, she engages in the conversation, but her heart and mind are elsewhere, unable to think of anything else but her lunch date and the resulting heartbreak from it. The scene replays over and over again, vivid and torturous, recalling Therese's subtle rejection again and again.

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Carol takes a drag to steady her nerves, but her hands tremble anyway. Her dinner mates don't seem to notice, but she knows Therese does, staring at her with the tiniest hint of a smile, red lips curled subtly at the corners. There's a confidence in her stance that Carol hasn't seen before. The woman in front of her is no longer the shy, indecisive girl she'd fallen for. No, this Therese has grown up in their time apart, and Carol finds herself overwhelmingly attracted to this girl – this woman – standing close and yet what feels like miles away.

"Excuse me," Carol apologizes, putting out her cigarette and standing. It takes all the self control she can muster not to run over to Therese, but Carol is suave as ever as she saunters over. The pair keep eye contact as she moves, breaking only for a moment as a man in a dark blue suit rushes past Therese in an attempt to find his party. When they're near, Carol presses her right cheek against Therese's. No one around them would be ever the wiser – the social kiss a standard greeting in the Oak Room – but the embrace lingers for as long as Carol can stand it. "My darling Therese," she whispers in their closeness. Although the room is loud, she knows Therese hears it by the squeeze she feels at the top of her forearm.

"Can we...go somewhere?" Therese suggests, looking around the room. It's incredibly crowded, not suitable for the conversation about to be had.

"Of course. Let me get my purse and we'll find a cab." Carol rushes back over to the table and grabs her belongings, digging briefly into her wallet to pull out the appropriate amount for her drink. She tosses it to the center of the table. "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I have to go."

"Are you ok?" One gentleman at the table looks at Carol with genuine concern.

"Oh yes, I'm fine." She smiles. "Actually, I've never been better." She steals a glance at Therese out of the corner of her eye, who stands like a goddess in the center of the room.

"Therese?" her female colleague asks with a smile.

Carol simply nods. The table wishes her well as she walks away, but it's muffled in the background as she makes her way back to Therese, focused on her and her alone. With her purse now in her possession, Carol gestures toward the exit with a subtle wave of her hand. Therese takes note and turns. They walk together, with Carol's hand resting on her lower back in a gentle caress.
Winters in New York can be deathly cold – Carol's learned this over many years in the city – but the wind is particularly icy this night. When they step outside, the air burns her face and briefly knocks the breath right of her lungs. Carol turns to Therese, who still clutches her tan-colored coat in her hands. “Here, let me...” Carol takes the coat from Therese and holds it out. Therese steps into it, then lingers in front of Carol with her back turned.

Carol tucks her face against Therese's neck. The heat of her breath puffs into the air and across the soft skin close to her lips. “Where do you want to go?” Carol asks. As snow begins to fall, Therese shivers in her embrace.

“Anywhere.”

The way Therese says it is breathy and pleading, and it makes Carol's heart race. “Do you have any idea how desperately I want to kiss you?” Carol asks, nuzzling her nose against the sensitive skin behind Therese's ear.

Therese turns to face her. She says nothing, but reaches out and brushes her thumb against Carol's bottom lip. Snowflakes collect on the end of Therese's eyelashes, and as Carol looks down at her, she admires the contrast of white against the dark mascara and light-purple eyeshadow brushed across Therese's lids.

Yearning for privacy, Carol walks to the edge of the sidewalk and waves her hand, signaling one of several cabs driving down the lightly snow-dusted street. She reaches for Therese as it comes to a stop. “Will my apartment be sufficient for tonight?”

Therese smiles. “Yes.”

Carol opens the back door of the cab and gestures Therese inside. Before joining Therese, Carol looks up at the sky. It seems unusually dark despite the sporadic streetlamps across the cityscape. The moon is nowhere to be seen, covered by the large, grey clouds behind the falling snow. The flakes fall at a steady pace, and as they hit the bare skin of her face and neck, it's refreshing despite the iciness, symbolically washing away the old and starting anew.

“470 Madison Avenue, please.”

Chapter End Notes

What was going to just be a one-shot is now more like a two (or possibly three) shot. Swoon-worthy romance ahead.

Leave a comment and say "hello" if so inclined :)
The distance to Madison Avenue is a only a little over a mile from the Plaza Hotel, but the ride takes much longer thanks to the mounting snowstorm. In the backseat of the cab, Carol turns to Therese. Light from street lamps and nearby businesses flickers through the window as they slowly make their way down 5th toward Madison, and Therese’s profile is stunning as Carol watches her stare out the window. The mixture of light and shadows highlights the bone structure of Therese’s face, the falling snow acting as a perfect contrasting background. Carol admires her from afar like a portrait, the tables turned on the artist.

Veiled under the darkness, Carol slides her hand across the seat and links her pinky finger with Therese’s, a seemingly innocent gesture that still makes her hold her breath as she initiates it. Therese doesn’t turn away from the window, and for a brief moment, Carol feels slightly dejected. When Therese brings their fingers closer together with a squeeze in response, though, Carol’s fears dissipate – for the moment, at least.

After twenty minutes of white-knuckled driving, they finally arrive at Carol’s apartment building. She hands over three dollar bills once they’ve parked and rushes out of the cab to the passenger’s side, ignoring the pleasantries their driver spews as she exits. Before she has the chance to open the door for Therese, it swings open from the inside.

Therese emerges a second later into the blowing snow, holding the chest of her coat closed tight to shield the wind. When she takes a step forward on the icy sidewalk, she stumbles a bit in her heels, and Carol – acting on impulse as well as the perfect opportunity to be the hero – reaches forward to steady her. Arm in arm, Carol closes the cab door with a swing of her hip, then leads Therese toward the apartment lobby.

“Good evening, ma’am,” the doorman greets with a bow of his head. He holds the door open and smiles.

“Stay warm, Jonathan. There’s a pretty nasty storm coming through,” Carol warns.

“I’ll certainly try.”

Once inside, the two move apart to brush snow off their hair and clothes. The flakes on Therese’s head start to melt from the heat of the building, glistening beneath the grand chandelier overhead; Carol gazes with not-so-subtle adoration. When Therese notices, she immediately looks away, but the blush on her cheek is not lost on Carol.

“I’m on the tenth floor, so we’ll want to take the elevator,” Carol instructs, pointing toward a pair in the corner of the room.
Therese follows without a word.

Both to Carol's excitement and anxious dismay, no one in the lobby joins them in the elevator to the top floors of the apartment building. As it comes to life and moves them upward inch by inch, Carol swallows the urge to steal a kiss from Therese, whose eyes are locked on the level indicators toward the ceiling. No one around them would be the wiser, Carol thinks to herself.

“I can feel you staring at me, Carol.” Therese smiles but keeps focused on the changing numbers.

“Can you blame me?” Carol steps closer. “And you? Have I become so repulsive that you can't bear to look at me?”

Therese laughs. “I thought I was the naive one? If I look at you, Carol, I will lose the tiny bit of resolve I have.”

Therese's words unexpectedly embolden Carol. She moves in front of Therese and cups her chin with one hand, stroking along her jawline with her thumb. “Would that be so terrible?” The tone of her voice is practically a purr, and when Therese finally looks at her, there's a fire in her eyes that Carol is certain she's never seen. The innocence at the start of their affair has been replaced with passion and a sense of self that Carol finds overwhelmingly attractive.

The elevator stops with a 'ding' and the doors slide open to reveal the 10th floor.

Carol turns on her heel, then entwines her fingers with Therese's and pulls her down the hallway. “I'm just a few doors down on the left,” she instructs. When they arrive at the door of apartment 1004, Carol finds it increasingly difficult to focus on opening it with Therese so close; it's almost impossible when Therese rests her hand on her lower back. It takes an embarrassingly long time to find her keys – nestled at the bottom of her handbag – and even longer to actually get the apartment unlocked when every nerve in her body tingles from Therese's touch.

“Are you alright, Carol?” Therese asks. The tone, however, is teasing and playful.

Carol narrows her eyes and smirks. “Just fine, dear.”

When they're finally inside, Carol switches on the living room lamp and adjusts the thermostat. Having not expected a snowstorm before she'd left for the evening, she'd left the apartment on the cooler side. “I'm sorry it's so cold in here. I hadn't expected company.” She kicks off her heels beside the living room sofa. “If you'd like, I can make some tea.”

“Carol.”

“Or I can get you something stronger. Might warm us up fas-”

“Carol.”

The light flickers as Therese calls her name. Carol thinks little of it, instead focused on the young woman inching toward her, her heels tapping against the linoleum floors as she moves. Therese tosses her coat over the back of the sofa, then reaches for Carol's hand. The space between them lessens when Therese takes a few more steps forward. When they're less than a foot apart, Therese brings Carol's hand to her lips and trails open-mouthed kisses along her palm and wrist. “I've missed you,” Therese confesses against Carol's skin.

Refusing to wait another minute longer, Carol grasps the collar of Therese's blazer and presses their lips together with bruising force. Nothing can make up for the lost time – the insatiable hunger that has only grown over the months – but that certainly doesn't stop Carol from trying. “You're
even more beautiful than I remember,” Carol whispers, bowing her head to kiss along the nape of Therese's neck. “I don't know how that is even possible, but it's true.” Without shame, she sucks and nibbles the sensitive skin along Therese's pulse, marking her for the world to see.

Therese whimpers.

As Carol reclaims Therese's lips, the lights around them flicker several times before going out completely. The familiar hum of the refrigerator and the furnace fade, and with a quick glance out the window, Carol notices the usually well-lit Madison Avenue is under complete darkness, made only more prominent by the raging snowstorm.

A blackout.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you, as always, for your lovely comments and words of encouragement <3
Chapter 3

When Carol had imagined inviting Therese to her bedroom, it hadn't been to search for candles. But if there's one thing she's learned in the last few months, it's that the universe has a funny way of taking what she's expected and turning it completely upside down.

“I think there are a few in there,” Carol instructs, rummaging through the top drawer of her dresser. Beneath a stack of neatly folded delicates, she finds a box of apple-cinnamon scented candles, a small set she'd bought in the fall that have gone unused until now. They're not exactly meant for lighting a room, but it will work for the small bit of mood lighting they need to prevent them from stumbling around in complete darkness. “There's a lighter in my nightstand.” Carol points toward her side of the bed.

With a quick nod, Therese walks over and retrieves it.

Carol takes the first candle out of the box and holds it out, waiting for Therese to light it. The wick of the candle catches the flame with ease, and before long, five of the six candles are lit and setup around the room. Down to the last candle, Carol holds it close to her face as she waits for Therese. When Therese lights it, they stand close for a moment, watching how the light flickers across each other's faces. Carol brushes her fingertips against the shadows dancing along Therese's clavicle. The younger woman's breath hitches, and Carol is pleasantly reminded of how sensitive her former lover's body is, trembling beneath her hands with the lightest of touches.

Carol rests the final candle on the top of the dresser, then takes Therese's hand to lead her to the edge of the bed. Carol sits, anticipating Therese to follow, but she stands instead, their knees touching. For a few moments, they remain very still, gazing into each other's eyes. It's quiet and intimate, and makes Carol feel slightly uneasy, her tall stature not lending to her being looked down upon very often.

“What are you thinking?” Therese asks. She must sense her unease, Carol surmises, as she reaches out and cups her cheek to comfort her.

“What many things,” Carol confesses. She closes her eyes and nuzzles against Therese's palm. “I'm amazed you're here. Terrified that you'll leave. Desperate for every inch of you.” Reaching for a fistful of Therese's skirt, she pulls her forward until Therese sinks into her lap. Carol turns her head and presses her cheek against the younger woman's breast, hearing and feeling her heart racing.

“I've thought of you every day,” Therese confides. She combs her fingers through blonde hair in a soothing yet seductive gesture. Beneath her, Carol shivers in the darkness. “You must understand why I've stayed away. Haven't answered your letters or.”

Carol looks up and captures Therese's lips, silencing her. Delightfully, Therese reciprocates, her
tongue eager and her hands sliding along Carol's inner thigh. “Touch me,” Therese whispers into Carol's mouth, and the sound of those two pleading words – almost whimpered - reduces Carol to a shivering mess.

“Say it again,” Carol begs, working on the buttons of Therese's black and white striped blazer. It falls over her shoulders and onto the floor.

“Touch me.”

Chapter End Notes

Hate me yet? ;)

Going into a very crazy work week and am not sure how soon I will be able to update, so I figured why not share this little nugget that will hopefully whet your appetite!

Thank you for all of you who have left kudos and comments. They have inspired me more than you know <3
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Not safe for work.

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See the end of the chapter for more notes

~ And I caught you
And I kissed you
And I took you
And I begged you
With a need too urgent to deny ~

When they'd made love for the first time, Carol let Therese's body guide her movements, soft and slow and gentle. Months later, Carol still listens and responds to Therese, but the interpretation is new – desperate and urgent. More surprisingly, the hands that had so delicately explored Carol's body with a sense of wonder now work more experienced magic this time, reversing the roles as Therese begins to undress her with swift fingers. The cold air tickles against her bare skin as Therese exposes it, vulnerable in her skirt and delicates.

Carol had remembered the tenderness – recalling it every day since they've been apart – but she hadn't realized the full extent of the pure passion until her hands press against Therese once more, sliding up the bare skin beneath the younger woman's t-shirt cut blouse. “My god, Therese, you're practically on fire,” Carol mutters, the heat of Therese's body radiating against her palms.

“Can you blame me?”

With a smile, Carol pulls Therese's top up and over her head, tossing it mindlessly across the room. In an instant, Carol's hands are on her once more, one stroking up and down her thigh while the other traces along a black lace brassiere. It's so much bolder than anything Carol has ever seen Therese wear, and the mere sight of it makes her shiver. “When did you get this?”

“Do you like it?”

Carol struggles with her answer. It isn't even a question that Therese looks stunning. Yet, Carol feels oddly jealous. She wonders if, during their time apart, someone else has sparked this newfound maturity in Therese.

With her mind made up, Carol slips her fingers beneath the band of the brassiere and unclasps it.

“You are stunning, Therese. But you don't need anything like this to make you that way.” Carol presses their lips together. Her fingertips ghost along Therese's shoulders until the black lace is nothing more than a distant memory in the darkness. When Therese says nothing in protest, Carol
switches their positions by scooping the younger woman up in her arms and standing. Together, they turn. Carol gently sets Therese down across the comforter below them.

Face to face, resting on her elbow, she tucks away some hair that has fallen into Therese's eyes. “I could look at you forever, and it still wouldn't be enough,” Carol whispers. Dipping her head and inching her own body downward, she lets her tongue caress the curves at her eye level. When her hand slides across Therese's taut stomach, Carol feels the muscles twitch beneath her.

Within moments, Therese is completely naked beneath her. Carol gazes in awe. Her chest feels heavy with emotion, and she buries her face between Therese's legs to hide. A tap on her shoulder stops Carol in her tracks.

“Carol?”

“Mmm?” She doesn't look up.

“I want to see you,” Therese confesses.

Carol brushes her lips against Therese's thigh. “I'm right here,” she whispers, nuzzling her face lower.

“You can't feel me?” Carol hums, a teasing vibration. She drops her voice and adds, “Are you sure?”

Therese resigns, arching her back instinctively.

It starts out slow and teasing, spelling out the love letters that have swirled in Carol's head with each flick of her tongue. Each whimper and purr from above spurs her on, her own body buzzing, tingling – aching. Months ago, Therese's voice was a murmur – quiet, polite. As she trembled and pulsed against Carol's fingers, a choked whimper signaled her fall. This Therese, however, is less cautious - uninhibited, allowing a string of words and moans to trickle freely from her mouth. Carol hears her name chanted like a prayer from above; it's almost enough to make Carol herself come undone.

-X-X-X-X-

She doesn't remember the exact moment Therese flips them, but Carol is certain she will never forget the feeling itself - Therese pressed against her from above, exploring. Therese appears hesitant at first – perhaps overwhelmed, unsure where to start. The corners of Carol's mouth curl into a smile. She brings Therese's hand to her lips and kisses the pad of each finger, with the softness of snow and the delicacy of glass. When their eyes lock, Carol daringly takes Therese's index finger between her teeth.

When Therese touches her – finally touches her – she can only describe it as ethereal, a shock of electricity in the dark. She gasps – once, twice – until Therese settles above and kisses her, finds a pattern with her tongue that matches the rocking of her hips and wrist. Carol squeezes her eyes tight – sees the white light and flecks of colors as she teeters on the brink. It's only minutes before she crests with a sob that Therese swallows, and when the world finally slows, Carol is greeted by the vision of her angel above her – flung out of space.

Chapter End Notes
And there we have it. My first love scene for this pairing. I hope I've done them justice.

One more chapter to go.

Comments make the author smile and inspire more.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

~ And I kissed you
And caressed you
And the world around us fell away
We said things in the dark
We never dared to say

And nothing mattered then
Except for you and I
Again and then again
Beneath a moonless sky ~

On New Year's, Carol had awakened in the middle of the night to find Therese fast asleep beside her. The red-orange curtains were closed save for a tiny sliver in the center that allowed a thin stream of moonlight to peek through. With the room veiled in shadows, Carol could see little, but the beam from across the room trickled across her lover's bare back to illuminate a smooth expanse of skin. In the silence, Carol danced her fingers along Therese's shoulder blades and spine, zig-zagging to touch the scatter of freckles across the younger woman's back. Lost in thought – in love, in adoration – Carol had admired her in the darkness for over an hour, caressing with her hands until Therese whimpered and shifted in her sleep.

When Carol wakes the evening of their reunion, it's to a moonless sky with no light to be found. Even in the darkness, Carol senses Therese's absence. The panic swells quickly as a lump in her throat. It's not as though she'd expected Therese to stay with her forever, but the idea of her leaving so suddenly makes her feel....well, Carol guesses this must be how Therese had felt that morning.

She looks over to her dressing table and notices her robe missing. Strangely, it calms her; surely, Therese would not have left with her robe, and Carol can't imagine anyone else who would have come into her apartment for the sole purpose of stealing it.

When her curiosity reaches its peak, Carol hears a crash from the kitchen. With surprising grace, Carol wraps the bedsheets around her naked body and tiptoes out of the room to follow the unexpected noise. “Therese?” she calls groggily, her voice deep and hoarse with sleep and a hint of fear. Even in the dark, Carol makes out the subtle curves of Therese's silhouette from the other side of the room.

“Shit, Carol, I'm sorry.” Therese hastily scoops something up from the floor. “I was just trying to get a glass of water. I wasn't really sure where I was looking and the dark didn't exactly help.”

Carol rests her hip and forehead against the doorframe, her head cocked. Truthfully, she's a little scandalized at the sound of her lover cursing, but equally enamored by the sight of Therese in her robe. The view lights an ironic flame within her – one that elicits both a burning across her skin and a wetness where she desires Therese most.

Holding the sheet against her chest, Carol joins Therese where she stands near the kitchen.
“Perhaps if you visited often, you might familiarize yourself,” she teases with a wink that is assuredly lost in the dark.

“I think I would like that,” Therese responds quietly.

“My robe suits you,” Carol hums. She slides her index finger and thumb along the fabric of the collar, feeling the warmth of Therese's skin radiating against the back of her hand.

“Does it?” Therese blushes, and for a brief moment, Carol is reminded of the sweet, naive girl she'd met last Christmas – the one desperate for attention, for adoration, for sweet words of encouragement. She caresses Therese's cheek, then neck, until her hand slips beneath the top of the robe in the way it had once upon another time. Carol drags a fingernail across Therese's collarbone until she feels the prickle of goosebumps. Without any inhibition, Carol drops the sheet, letting it fall into a pile beside her.

The faint moan that escapes Therese's lips at the sight of her makes every inch of Carol's skin burn. It's mere seconds before Therese touches her, tracing over each curve. Carol trembles, and she supposes she could blame the chill in the air, but she knows better.

Therese strokes along Carol's hipbone with her thumb – back and forth, back and forth – and Carol is shocked at how erotic such a small gesture can be.

“Therese?”

“Hmm?”

To her own surprise, Carol's voice shakes. “If you don't take me to bed this instant, I may go mad.”

In an instant, Therese moves against her, up on her tiptoes to capture Carol's lips in a deep, tender kiss. The cloth robe tickles Carol's naked skin, and with skilled fingers, she divests Therese of it in one fell swoop. Still standing, Therese uses her height to her advantage, barely needing to dip her head to swipe her tongue over Carol's bare breast. With other lovers, Carol hadn't responded so fervently, but against Therese's mouth, her nipple hardens, a jolt rushing through her in the process. An uncharacteristic whimper falls from her lips, and the twinkle in Therese's eyes as she glances upward is not lost, even shielded by the night.

Therese steps forward, which forces Carol back. When Carol's pressed against the side of the couch, Therese stops and claims another kiss before dropping to her knees. Carol feels like a queen, and when Therese's mouth moves against her, she's certain she could conquer nations with the pure euphoria racing through her veins. In the back of her mind, she wonders where this bold woman has emerged from – this siren, this vixen ravishing her so openly, so willingly. Yet, all she can do is submit, her fingers tangled in Therese's slightly-curled brown hair as she holds tight and braces for impact.

Therese nuzzles Carol's thighs further apart with her nose and breathes her lover's name there.

-X-X-X-X-

Draped across the sofa, the pair rock in tandem, Carol's fingers curled to coax Therese over. When Therese opens her legs wider, Carol adds another finger instinctively.

“Carol,” Therese gasps.

Her name – breathy, moaned – is music to Carol's ears. Even when Therese's fingernails dig into her shoulder blades and drag down her spine, Carol still works steadily.
“Carol.” This time, it comes out more strangled than before. “Carol, I-”

“Shhh, darling.” Carol coos. “I'm right here. Always here.”

-X-X-X-X-

Their lovemaking is divine, but Carol finds herself obsessed with the feeling of Therese's head against her chest, her breath slow and even as she sleeps. When Therese's eyelids flutter in her dreams, her long lashes tickle the bare skin on Carol's sternum. It's been months since she's felt so calm – so comfortable and at peace with the world.

She wonders what Therese will say when she wakes. Perhaps she'll reconsider it all – for the better or the worse. Her offer still stands, and Carol desperately hopes Therese will take it. Carol is addicted to the feeling of her, to the taste of her – to her softness, her smell, her everything. She nuzzles her nose against the top of Therese's head and inhales slowly.

Out of the corner of her eye, Carol notices the tiniest bit of light spill from the other side of the living room curtains.

Chapter End Notes

Well, folks. We've reached the end of this little fic. However, I think I can safely say that this will not be the last of this Post-Oakroom universe. There are so many stories to tell about their lives together :)

Comments, as always, make the author smile and inspire more. I hope you have enjoyed this "swoon-worthy romance", as I so lovingly like to refer to it.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!