

3 A.M.**

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varicose veins
twist across the broken streets,
and dull gray shadows
sway
beneath the fallow light
of skeletal lampposts.

darkness wears silk tonight,
and love oozes from her throat
like honey
spilling down a honey jar.

i am fingered
by sodden hands
that claim my heart.

“but i am only
twentytwoyearold!”
i protest,

my words spraying in a mist
and catching in the web
that the mysterious
black-eyed
woman
spins.

sibilant echoes
twitch convulsively
beneath my ribs,
burgeoning madly,
rising,
until finally
i hear the sonorous roar
of surrender
clanging down eternal halls,
spilling thunderously
into the abyss—



“take me,” i whisper.
“take me in your arms!
I AM COME TO YOU!!
HERE!
MY SOUL . . .”

the city lies on its back
like a cancer-eaten giant
not yet dead,
and not even darkness
removes the stench
of mangled hearts
and souls
that are imbedded in its pavement.

neon lights flash
beside the scarlet wounds
while the heart slows.

here
i write my name
within the cracks and crevices.
here
i infest my blood with its disease.
here
i take my leave of love—

here my leave of life,
no longer bold
to call you darling,
no longer strong to take you down,
unable
even in death
to destroy your
image.

** (For proper reference, see *The Crack Up*, F. S. Fitzgerald, “Handle With Care.”)