Ritual at Midnight

Naomi Lazard
RITUAL AT MIDNIGHT

This is what I do. First I kneel to the gods of desolation. They give me the sacrament of memory. It never satisfies. It is the consolation I have no use for except to fill these silences you leave behind.

From this silence there is no reprieve. I am ready to promise anything, swear I will starve, live on bread and water, a little fruit, the gatherings of dust. If I could only find some bark to chew on in this wasteland where there are no trees. If I could only sleep.

If I could only sleep myself awake back in the day we saw the two eaglets in their nest, when we heard with all our ears the yellow beat of wings; when the edges of the light were crystal and we were the shining feathers of the eaglets’ flight. I fall into the familiar dark.

Then the dark gives you up to me whole, dressed for the meal. The butcher of the night slices you piece by piece, turns you on the spit, feeds me this expensive dish. I take your flank between my hands and bite.