
Ruth Fainlight

SHE BE ME

– with acknowledgments to Jamie McKendrick

When I arranged a meeting with my self
predictably *she* – as I'll call her – turned up late.

I had sat an hour at a table and drained
three cups of coffee when she wafted in,

looking like me with a better haircut, younger,
with an insouciant air and the feeblest excuse.

The waiter I'd flirted with to no avail
as the place emptied was suddenly all smiles.

I offered her lunch as it was clear
she had no money, nor plan for the future

– none of which I myself had that much of
but at least I'd arrived on time, time being

what I had less of, which made her lateness
even worse. I could tell she didn't know

what she wanted – to drink, to have, to be.
A vaguely startled look blurred her eyes

as if her confidence was just a bluff.
I could have told her that what lay ahead

would test a sturdier nerve than hers
but why waste words – she'd find out soon enough.

All the fool seemed utterly sure of
was never in her life would she be me.