The Weather

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Would you stop all time? Would you stop the crumbling of ancient Roman marble, stop the life of the sun—render the world a single instant, like a photograph? There would be no more sorrow or malice or anything at all for that matter… Nor would there be any love or creativity or anything at all for that matter... Shoppers stuck leaning into store windows like manikins, babies half born, ships entrenched in water like glass, rice and silver glitter ever-adorning the air of ever-smiling newlyweds ever-emerging from the alter; never another night, in the East never another day, and no one would know. Like dying in a dreamless sleep. Apathy without apathy, numbness without numbness, silence without silence, and overall clear uninterrupted infinite

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I. Light showers

The New Year was briefly wet and windy, but that was enough for the city to cancel the fireworks. The lonely navy night swelled in aggravation. How she loved the bursts of ruby, the blooms of gold, the showers of silver—when she twirled the Earth away from the pale, annoying sun, she leaned into the shadow, when we can view her best, and watched...

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In the morning, she cried comets and dragged with her ring finger a blanket of clouds to lull the city into a blind hypnotic drone—where death is deep ebony eyes. Or should I say shallow? After all, what is there? The sockets sink into infinite wells, but the darkness only coats its surface. Behind are swirls and streams of color and thought. When your eyelids fall, you see the haunting of colorful blurs and patterns (like oil in a puddle or watching the rapid erosion of iridescent marble runes). It is these ghosts of light, collected in a clamor of blinking waves (which clash and explode behind the empty leaden veils) of everyone and everything of all time.

(Anablephobia. It's the fear of

Infinity.)

Their backs arced tragically as they lean into me. They stopped dancing. Through lush, narrowly parted lips, I could smell all the vodka they'd been poured (that drooled down their chins). Sighs and vulgar wails, liquid hearts and limbs. Retribution came vast and smothering the next morning—tracing careening ivory with my fingertips—when everyone wakes to their hangovers and mistakes in the soft light of a leaden day.

One had a librarian's body. One howled hail. Another, the same, I forgot her name, dreamt of Roman sails. All slept on ceilings with other men—after cursing their hips and pursing their lips. Some sprawled out leaking alcohol, and sucking in sobriety with yawns. Some twisted and coughed up oil. They slept, dreaming of love in fall, for leaves to wreath their heads. They were waiting for anything to miss. I could have had any of them.

(Katie leaked blond film strips from their eye lids and finger tips—dawn beaming from her yawning mouth. So long she'd smoked and wept and screwed around, and I waited to know how she howls.)

She once was a good friend of mine—all wrapped up in the doorway with towels. She smells of Oregon, like she drags canyons and pines. She was pale as a glacier. She moved slow and cold. She took her time tearing nature and taking my picture with opal eyes.

Katie, Katie, Katie…

I woke next to Katie.

The suburbs stirred around the others' pounding heads, all churning with routine and work. They took long showers and dried their hair, wondering why it was such a shock. Some crawled from under their skins and finally began to cocoon and listen to their tears.

(I heard it in a sea shell:

my own blood flowing harshly).

II. Clear Skies (Ceiling)

A pyramid of smooth stones sat before the mob, which the town's daughters had collected from the river earlier that morning. They faced a man, slowly waking, but still only slightly conscious. An anomalous ceiling of fine marble stretched behind him into the mountain's horizon, but faded into air past the tips of his sprawled fingers. He crawled and clawed at the ground, grinding his television head against the sand. He rolled over and wavered to a stance, clutching the box and caressing in panic the scraped screen. A small girl, in a toga of towels, peeked out from behind her father's strong worker's legs. She scanned over the slope of black rocks, and settled on the glistening ivory stone she had picked up earlier that shone so beautifully and made her forget how cold the water was around her shins—made her forget to hold up her virgin-white dress. "Yeh know the rules. Yeh gotta set it 'n the pile, Katie," he'd said to her. Her father felt her tug on his pant leg, and looked down at her moons of lustful eyes (cringing by the gym). He checked his watch, and nodded.

She ran, and groping with her lovely innocent hands, snatched up her stone. Her thin tiny fingers could hardly clasp around it, but she heaved it far enough to hit the television-man. The mob charged, stoning the screen into shards. When it was over, when the pyramid had depleted, what remained of the screen's fragments turned first sky-blue, then faded to opaque white, and blew away like crumbled chalk.

The same girl who had hurled the first rock edged forward, pushing back the fading marble ceiling. It started to tremble at its rim, and began to lurch back against her, like magnets stubbornly pushing against their identical poles. Katie strained, and struggled forward as if against a hurricane-gale of resistance. Her tiny voice whimpered. When she fainted the marble ceiling launched forward and dove into a wall with a tremendous sound of rumbling.

The town gasped and shrieked in terror. Apeirophobia. It's

the fear of looking up.

The town ran toward Katie who laid motionless—the atoms of her face next to the atoms of the wall with no room to spare (they were no different at all).

In the wall, the town carved a mural of lovely little hands laced with roses and rivers of sash. On that tremendous marble altar, they built the ladder to heaven. They climbed for months, and finally reached the lowest dome of sky. They pounded and yelled, but it was sky-blue glass—solid and cold. So they climbed down, losing a few to far falls (whether they were suicides no could tell).

On Earth, before the altar, some slowly starved in insanity or rolled in opal shards until they were empty. Others thrust their heads on crude stone hammers and condemned rock n roll

beneath video-channel blue

or eclipsed grey hues.

III. Overcast

Jericho swirled the cloud of cream in his coffee with the ring finger I once saw twisting strawberry blond, and tracing frays of grass. He wiped it with a napkin. He lit a cigarette. The smoke spread into the cafe until it deluded into oblivious ( ).

“What do you say? Why can’t we just work it all out right here?” he asked.

"We simply don't have that kind of time, or enough money for all that coffee. Besides, I think this place closes at 8."

“Time is just memory. You take zero, twist it like an 8, lay it on its side, and you’ve got infinity."

“Does that mean anything?”

"*C'est la vie*.," he said. (“So is life.”)

"*Quelqu'un durée*…" I said. ("Any time now…")

He waved the waitress over to warm his cup. "This overcast’s getting thick. Looks like it’s going to rain."

"The report said partially cloudy,” I said, turning to gaze out the window at the darkening sky.

(He woke alone a year ago, before she came home
wearing two morning breaths like two colors of lipstick.)

IV. Hurricane Warning

She sat with her legs crossed on January First in a wet marble basin, under the shower's spray. She played with her toes, picking at dead skin, trying to scrape off the last flecks of nail polish. She slipped a chained plug into the drain.

She splashed and patted the water as it rose, occasionally bringing her knees up to her chest, cuddling herself. Mostly she just rubbed her inner thighs and lower belly, or wrung out her strawberry blond, or just listened to the quiet trickle of the water, the quiet pitter-patter of the water, the droning babble of the indifferent showerhead.

She wondered why she lied sometimes: About going to photography school in New York and about not being married to that boy in the coffee shop (he told her she was pretty), about her first kiss to Jericho, and about Jericho to lovers. She just wanted things a little more romantic. Not Tom Miller's sky-blue vodka tongue by the gym. She still tasted him when she took shots.

Candles loitered on the window sill next to the shower—she hadn't lit them for about a year. Everyone said, "So thin, so pretty," after 17—but she had never believed it. Those careening ivory legs now submerged in warm bath water in a white marble tub—the walls began to buckle.

She left the shower on. She liked the noise: the soft rapping like a thousand fingers, like tiny men with liquid hammers carpentering the ladder to

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She slipped around a while, rubbing soap on her sleek forearms, splashing water on her face, etc. She thought about going out into the yard later, maybe not even drying herself first, just letting the sun evaporate the water from her skin: a lover’s touch. But it was a pallid day: overcast.

Maybe the wind could blow the shower’s droplets away, tear the stream of water-beads onto the floor, under the door, over the brim of the winding stairs. Then the wind could dry her, too. Or time would dry her fine—waiting along and listening to the rhythm of the waves or better the slow tide. (A stream spiraling down the stairwell tracing the curl of a sea shell trickling down her thighs.)

She clenched her eyelids and cuddled her knees among those iridescent ghosts of light. *Happy New Year,* she thought a year after us, wondering where I head been.

Earlier she stretched under her cream sheets and listened to the weather report. A hurricane warning. The city took a shower. The wind pounded with fists of their bedroom-things on her walls and burst through her windows and tore through her photo albums while Jericho pounded on her bathroom door begging she get out they've got enough don't be afraid they have each

other.

That night he sat in the basement, sullenly lighting red fireworks with his finger tips. *Where had she blown?* He made shadow puppets using the light of the fireworks.

(*How many hurricanes can Delaware bear?*

she thought as her life caved in.)

He blinked and stopped the fountain of sparks... then the hurricane… then the rest of existence: the Earth, the solar system, the galaxy, etc. His sorrow expanded past its borders and stopped the motion of everything in the universe. Silence without silence. Everything still except my snores, his heaving breath, and Katie’s body rushing towards the sea:

Time stopped for him. Nothing moved but his hands. Existence held its breath for his shadow puppets on the red-washed wall. Time waited patiently to resume, the suspended sparks waited, and somewhere waiting waves, waiting insanity, waiting broken glass and photos hanging on air (walls were everywhere). He cried the tears running down his red cheeks (until they left his chin and joined the timeless world).

All the world's chaos a statue—he showed his hands to the hiding sun, and the hiding sun looked fondly upon his hands, tangling themselves and projecting little black shadow-pictures and little black shadow-animals. That was the biggest thing happening in the universe. I was still asleep.

He walked south first, past the overcast and through cities of day, to New York to see me. Then he went West to cities of dusk, and then, reaching the Pacific, found himself in the cities of early evening. Manifest destiny.

Portland: he laid down and gave himself back to the Earth. His skin stayed soft and pure but all inside became ash and water that leaked from his lips, his finger tips, his eyelids. Only then was the coma of time cured. You all began as you were and never knew the quiet he heard, or the sunbeams fractured by shadows of his hands' beasts and birds.

This was Jericho. This was my friend Jericho.

Cuddling quilts of stone.

V. Clear Skies

There was a flash and the marble was carved, curving in lovely forms up and down itself. The marble was an untouched rectangular slab—a monolith.

"The marble was never even there," she said. I'm not sure what to believe of that… She says it's the same way a cello can radiate the most intricate melody, climbing the rungs of a long and beautiful cadence, cringe on an awkward note, and then die completely into quiet while our ears strain in search of the final notes. Simple air. She careens her fingertips over the back of my palm,

and so on…:

Tracing fountains and crude figures of birds. She said she'd come from Delaware. Her ancestors from Reykjavik, where Eric the Red sailed to Greenland after being exiled for killing two men. There he had a son named Leif Eriksson, who would sail to a place named Vineland, where Rome had sent an evil that had long been waiting for him. Sparrows swarming with deep ebony eyes, who had pecked out the tongue of Galileo, and chirped poisoned words of guidance to the crews of Columbus. They soared over China with opium flowing from the tips of their wings. They swarmed through the Americas, playing hide and seek, behind them appearing offerings of sea shells on short strings.

And all was lulled.

Jericho tossed the empty bottle, and it was caught by the invisible shelf of air and time, waiting for him to blink so the city could lovingly blink with its countless electric eyes through day and night. Betrayal, failure, disaster. Darkness, chaos, ruin.

Remembering. Redemption.

Rapture.

VI. Confetti

Liberate the marble, the Before. Free the dictionary's crude heirloom. Toss it to the bonfire alongside the cello: let it burn. Fire in the Library, fire in the Catacombs. Suck in the ashes. So you destroy possibility with the promise of infinity.

Severed hands
reattached: grace of Sunlight.

Hurrah ( ). Colors everywhere.

There must be some Combination—the most beautiful lines or letters. Come together. And they begin to. *Come together.* The thoughts slipped away from me. The moment I struggled to remember they were gone forever. *and…*

(I carried no luggage. I dreamt in the attic. I woke up on New Years and heard no one's traffic.) That morning, a year had passed. Taste of only one morning-breath. No skin-taste of Katie. No kiss-taste of Katie. No Katie-taste of air. Lonely tongue, hollow hands.

I looked out my attic window. Every car in Manhattan stood still. Every person in Manhattan stood still. All their bags stood still, all their shoes stood still, all their clothes stood still. Even that subtle life of the sun stood still—as if its distant heart had stopped beating. Walking cautiously onto the streets, only I made any sound. Something happened and nothing was happening. I felt maddened as a demophobe (fearofcrowds) packed in the teaming throng of our New Year's parade. I yelled, perched like a doomsday preacher on a newspaper dispenser: *Solaria opellum. Lenaway telo lovanella!* (Which means nothing, except solaria in English is a room open to sunlight.)

A mass of awed statues only stood untouched, all huddled to the brim of the streets—streets which brimmed themselves with a marching band. Balloons and confetti suspended all through the air.

I broke shop windows, threw TVs out off balconies, smashed my hand trying to open a sewer mantle, jumped down stairs and landed on my ankle, lacerated my arm grabbing at a globe through a glass storefront...

I walked over to the harbor, swatting through the suspended confetti shower. I hopped off the pier and spent a while looking East on a barren, waste-ridden desert (the ocean was busy storming through Delaware), playing with sand—sometimes tracing sky-blue glass through the grains with my fingertips (like ink from a pen).

Jericho came to me and saw the lines. He said, "Come home West—to ride lovely ivory into infinity." I felt like a child whose mother asked him to come in out of the rain. I'd found a puddle's iridescent dance of oil. Tears sprang painfully from my eyes.

I sketched, staring and pouting:

Bathmophobia: Fear
of
stairs

I blinked and let her stir somewhere I'll never know. Life leaving me, I let her blond aura radiate—I submerge in it, let it hollow me,

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and Jericho sat satisfied, smoking in the sand next to my lifeless body.

But Katie never woke (caught floating through the air of Delaware, her body broken). And Jericho staggered away, feeling both sweet and monstrous like a crag of lightning.

He walked to Seattle for a change of scenery. These endless months he stumbled, sleepless, and no one ever knew, everything motionless but the shadow on the moon.

He walked down to Portland to check out some photo galleries and architecture and to dance through town with hands full of gold watches—all fractured and always tic-tocing sometimes backward, lurching forward, or twisting in circles pointing towards the marble ceiling.

Only one did he find bending forward and back on its thin heel, tossing and catching the sun around its orbit. Only one did he find with ice tea caught behind its glass face, which waxed and waned with the moon.

He found himself inside sometimes. He wandered through a white maze lined with azure screens, all the way to the top of a building.

A grizzly homeless man—a veteran—sat on the roof's edge, frozen in mid-swig of some shining vodka (reflecting the halted sun). Jericho replaces the bottle with a diamond laden watch. The Veteran, now the richest he's ever been.

Jericho chugs the rest and tosses the bottle off the roof. It freezes in the air as it leaves his fingertips. *Don't blink, Jericho.*

"Maybe if I just rest my eyes for a while—"

Years had passed, and no time had passed at all.

The Veteran found his bottle suddenly gone, transformed from one frame of life to the next into a shiny golden watch—like the sun had blinked and transported into his hand its daughter on a chain, with Roman numerals and revolving, ticing, tocing hands of blond, like those that burst from her father's soul in his afternoon glare.

He heard a crash of breaking glass and a swerving car as a tremor shook his building.

And so the cello bowed.

Any time now…

VII. Pinholes in a Navy Blanket, and the Moon

Before any of this, Jericho told me about a dream he once had:

"All of ancient Rome was flooded in a pool of azure water (it always remained as bright and cold as the lowest dome). Everyone walked around, holding up their robes, while they aged, but never died. The sun never rose or set: it stayed thawing the sky with early dawn.

"Some would submerge themselves underwater, and be lifted peacefully to a land of quilts and sunlight. Others chose to begin climbing stairs and building ladders to liberate themselves of the city, but if they ever touched dry ground, it would open up beneath their feet and they would fall forever—into the yawning Earth. Others, when they submerged, became statues on an ever-sinking pedestal. They were stone except their lidless eyes, which would forever have to stare into the darkening waters, watching their loved ones suffer by eternally falling and dying and decaying while they remained simply sinking into oblivion. The visions were projected by their own eyes—which could never blink or be relieved in moons of glaucoma. I woke up in the storm at dawn, and thought I was still asleep. I felt like I had been there so long…"

He looked out the window and thought of Katie. Beautiful, and charming, and his. She claimed (in delirious whispers) to know the secrets of the winds, of the woods, and of (she touched the gold watch on his wrist). He'd come down to New York for the day to visit me. They were getting a house together in Dover. I hadn't yet met Katie, I hadn't yet met her lips.

He looked out the window while she slept in and dreamt of washing her hair and paying the rent, as her strawberry blond fell onto her sheets, down on her arm, out of her window and into the yard, flowing off to the coast, down the dimming shore, slipping into the ocean, stirring something there, waiting there for the time, our love waiting, suspended, unreal for the time.

Katie burst upon the eyes of our ancestors, who stare from under a lake (on the altar), and sing lullabies

that could never illuminate the night

or restart the wreckage of the watch.

VIII. The Weather

I came across Jericho walking through the empty sound of 3am without traffic. “Jericho!” I said. He spoke soundlessly with a mouthful of video channel blue. It flashed onto my face.

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I walked off the edge of the opal city, plucking bursts of light like flowers from the backs of my eyelids. I bundled them like a bouquet, saved for a girl I know back home. I sat on a beam like a bench and waited. The parade shimmered. I waited for the tide to trickle through my teeth.

(We’ll caress in the place behind our eyes, watching the sunrise boom humming, bowing, howling, climbing harmonies to cuddle the rain. (I watched it spiral down a stairwell.) I’ll braid her hair with the strings. It’ll do me well.)

Any time now.