

## Restless

This is not an easy space.  
(No, it is too early for that.)  
It is the risking of angst. It is the risking of sentiment.  
The dread of nipples brushing against a thin cotton shirt.  
The disgust of sweaty, abjected breasts.

A western scrub-jay stalks around on the porch,  
waiting snatch up the wriggling barn swallow chicks  
into its screeing beak.

&

(Do not say “my”. Instead, scree like a bird.)  
Hot air building in a throat,  
drying out the wet sanctuary of the mouth.  
Nothing ever grows here but dust storms.  
Howling waste.

&

It is the father who got his family right the third time.  
It is the mother who didn't get what she planned.  
Scree.

&

There are no chicks to consume.  
Eggs were never laid. They will never hatch.

## Chemical Fire

You piss in the shower; you sleep on the stairs. A hazy morning as smoke oozes across the sky. I miss the white light of the desert. The light here is yellow. It is thick and shoves itself into my mouth like a gag. Today, the asphalt will be so hot that you will break eggs on the curb while nursing a forty. I will wear a dress and no underwear. The sweat will gather around our jointed skin, making us glistening and unbearable.

\*

There is a chemical fire burning in New Iberia. Businesses have been evacuated within a five-mile radius.

\*

At night, you count the holes in the ceiling. Sometimes, you have waking nightmares about spiders. You scream at the moon for birthing them. I pretend to sleep. I wait for you to wear yourself out like a two-year old. You turn off the a/c and open a window. You count by threes. 3, 6, 9... 12, 15, 18... 21, 24, 27... 30, 33, 36... The grinding, the grinding, the grinding.

\*

The cause of the fire is unknown. The company that is the site of the fire provides asphaltene treatment products, biocides, and corrosion inhibitors.

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Together, we drink a bottle of wine. You say I make you lonely. Outside, the thrumming of cicadas is like a siren. The trees are heavy with sound. I tell you piss is sterile. You open the slider and throw the empty wine bottle into the street. The glass glitters in the light of oncoming high-beams.

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An information officer for the State Troopers stated, "Well, we just gotta let it burn itself out."

## Eschatology

1.

My mom says that I would create something to be afraid of and then set about confronting it. I was afraid of roly pollies, so I would dig them up and let them crawl on my hand. I was afraid of dogs, so I would let them jump on me. I was afraid of thunderstorms, so I would watch the weather and read books about how they were formed.

As we drive in the car, I explain, "Those are thunderheads. If the weather has been right all day, they can lead to tornadoes." I am remembering the picture in a weather book at school. Dark grey thunderheads were suspended in the sky.

"There aren't going to be any tornadoes," my mom sighs.

"But, they *can*."

One night, I woke up and came to her. "I just realized that one day I'm going to die." I did not stop crying.

2.

While not from a particularly religious family (It was about as consistent as sobriety), I was raised in a religious manner. My schools were religious. Teachers, clergy, classmates: all had steadfast beliefs about God being in his heaven, &c, &c. Being a difficult emotional kid, I grew up believing in a certain system of rewards and punishments. God only provides for those who are willing to give in. Those who are unruly will never gain access to true faith and forgiveness. Hell is a place of suffering for people of profound evil, and there will always be room for you.

I once got in trouble for saying that the book of Job was stupid bullshit.

If you had enough faith, you would not be afraid.

3.

I remember the moment I felt my brain crack. Such an absurd situation, watching a show about Bible Codes. Hidden within words are numbers. Hidden inside numbers are letters. Hidden inside strings of letters are prophecies.

But I felt it. Something snapped and turned off. For a week I didn't leave my house. I stopped eating. I slept all day and night. My therapist suggested I call my parents.

"Something's wrong," I sob to my mother, "I think I'm broken. The world is ending. I just want to die."

My divorced parents come to see me at college. They never say it directly, but I'm sure they want to bring me home to commit me. A mixture of agoraphobia and shame propels me to convince them that I should stay.

4.

On campus, a mole comes out of a hole while I sit between classes. I read one book that says moles are a symbol of death.

5.

I start seeing a homeopath that tells me Bible Codes are real. He suggests that I try remote viewing and directs me to a website. He tells me "They predicted Katrina, though it was bound to happen. New Orleans was founded under Scorpio." There are lots of questions about my family, and I think he believes I was abused. I tell him it wasn't my family.

He tells me to watch a documentary about Indigo children because he thinks I might be one.

I stop seeing him at the advice of the therapist that initially recommended him.

6.

I start taking Prozac, but it makes me feel numb. I start taking Lexapro, but it makes me want to kill myself. I stop taking everything except my anti-psychotics because they help me sleep. Otherwise, I have waking night terrors. I see figures in the house. I talk to people in the room who are not there. I wake up to find myself crouched in corners or standing on my bed in a defensive posture.

I research Bible Codes. I read about other end of the world prophecies. People on websites asking for money to plan a trip to Africa, where the new world will begin after the Ark of the Covenant is rediscovered. Talk of Australia being the only safe place to live after nuclear war. 2012. Nibiru. Pole shifts. Mega tsunamis and super volcanoes. Solar flares. I start printing out escape routes. When a truck drives past my

apartment, my heart stops. I cannot look up at the sky. I only eat one bagel a day and have started to work out. I have never been thinner or more insane.

I read my tarot every day. The Hermit comes up often.

I talk to a Christian brother at the school about the end of the world. He says, "I believe in entropy." He doesn't believe in predictions. I hold his words inside my broken brain.

My mom drives me to Madrid. The sky does not explode or darken with comets.

7.

I run out of Klonopin.

I start working at an herb store. Customers come in with disposable face masks on the days the chem trails are bad. People call to place mail orders and I listen to them for hours as they talk about Echinacea going extinct and how they will die without it. This is 2006. Pandemics start getting bandied about in the press. We make Thieves Oil. We suggest multivitamins. I send my parents remedies to take if they get sick. I consider printing up suicide plans in case something awful happens.

One night, I dream about a beautiful place that doesn't exist. My coworker tells me that it's Summerland.

8.

I go to Maine with my boyfriend. His mother is angry that I don't leave the cabin much. He tells her I'm recovering from some issues. A good Christian woman, she says, "I can help her if she would only let me."

My boyfriend and I go kayaking on a glacial lake. The glaciers are melting and polar bears are dying. I look to the bottom, but clouds have begun to pass over and all I see is a deep, heavy darkness.

9.

I have a new job working with non-profit for girls. My boss' brother tells me about a shaman he knows who is preparing for 2012. Another co-worker tells me that we are entering an ancient part of the galaxy in 2012 that looks like a birth canal. We are literally to be reborn into a new age of understanding. I remember another friend told

me years ago that we are entering a part of the galaxy that has more comets and meteors than other areas. He says we cannot possibly watch all areas of the sky.

I begin meditation. The night terrors continue. I dream about dead bodies in the mattress. My boyfriend is woken up by me screaming at him to get out of the bed. I tell him I see things possessing him.

I apply to graduate school.

10.

We move. The night terrors continue. I have waking dreams about spiders falling from the ceiling, but that is an old, recurring dream from when I was a baby. I was dehydrated and hallucinating about spiders coming into my bed. It is my earliest memory.

11.

Meditation. Therapy. Medication.

I get The Hermit tattooed on my right arm. A ball of twine is tattooed onto my forearm. Around it are the words "For what is the purpose of cursive, if not to write in the dark".

Graduate school teaches me about true empathy. It is a breaking down of an older self. Something falls away. Something rebuilds.

I write my poetry thesis about bodycentric poetry and sexual assault. My graduate presentation is about gender violence, horror movies, and poetry.

My mentor and professor leads a Master's workshop on writing the poem you cannot write. She has us write a poem where we dress the dead body of the person you love the most. I had chosen my husband, but cannot write the poem. I think of Bible Codes and an old fear about words making things corporeal resurface. We talk about my past sexual assault. I am embarrassed, but lighter.

12.

My friends and family start talking about the end times. A rapture is predicted for 2010. It doesn't happen. The end time talk continues. Some times it's "the world is

just ending" and sometimes it's "well, when the world explodes". Eventually, it evolves into "well, it's the end of the world AS WE KNOW IT".

I buy heirloom tomatoes. My husband and I cook lasagna. We have sex and play video games. We argue. We laugh. We watch movies with the people we love.

13.

I am pregnant.

On December 20th, I text my husband: "Will you get some gallons of bottled water." He responds: "Are you really worried about water running out? I thought we talked about this."

"No," I type, "Just about tomorrow. Soothe my paranoia, okay?"

I have not printed up suicide plans, but I call both my parents. I don't tell them why, but I just want to hear their voices.

The world does not end. I get an ultrasound on the 21st. The baby is fine. The baby is stubborn.

I did not kill myself.

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