

Suspended Animation: a Love Story

or

An Examination of Simultaneous Explosions in Slow Motion as Seen by the Bomb

*In Your Epicenter (I)*

We would go to pretentious parties at hip apartments in the city. We would pretend we knew the artists. We snorted shitty coke off of coffee table books and drank expensive liquor with stupid names. We lost track of where we were and how we got there and who brought us.

That night we were at some artist's house. He touched you on the back and whispered in your ear. You made clever jokes and flirted furiously. I felt embarrassed and forgotten. He grabbed your hand to lead you through the swamp of sweaty bodies, hips thrusting and thumping against others to dub-step bass, veins and vision pulsing.

I thought I was going to lose you, but you grabbed my hand and pulled me. No bodies touched us, nor did they part. They had choreographed a lazy dance to guide us through their body. Then we were on stairs, then in a master loft. There were faces with bodies and voices and more drugs. He snorted and you snorted and I snorted. There was tequila or gin and we all cheered and took shots and my jealousy floated away as my blood was fortified.

Then he was gone, and he had forgotten you and you had forgotten him and neither of you felt hurt by this and I envied that. I looked around the room at the others who owned names that I didn't know or couldn't remember, and felt lonely again for an instant.

I looked at you and you smiled and told me you loved me. We were hovering and uncertain and maybe happy. Your smile assured me that I wasn't forgotten and nobody's name

mattered.

We drank more in that room and smoked and danced and had our own private party with unnamed strangers who were our best friends just for this moment. We were unknown to the mob of bodies below and it felt good and right.

I said, You look beautiful.

You said, What? But I could only read your lips and I realized how loud the music is. You look away before I can say it again. You are only dancing now.

I dance also. I dance and you dance and we dance to three or fourteen songs. Then I am exhausted and I sit on a bench at the foot of the bed where our friends sit and smoke a joint.

I take a hit and you come over and take a hit. I feel sick and happy and wonder if I am able to feel one without the other. You pass it then lift your arms up, euphoric. I touched your waist and you allowed my fingers to trail down to your hip, then your ass. I pull you to me and you do not resist. You turn and sit on my lap. You nestle your ass into my crotch and pull my arms tight around your waist. You talked to the others and smoked the joint, but I am too entranced by you and your body to look anywhere or touch anything but you.

When the joint is finished it is late and people begin trickling downstairs like liquid seeping through the carpet and floor and dripping into the swamp below. Soon it is only you and me and all time and no time has passed. You turned to me and I remembered that we are here and that we are now. You touch my face and say, I know you are in love with me. I grin a stupid drunken grin. You smile at me sadly. You leave.

*In the Beginning Was the Word*

We drink until we feel all warm and impaired. We leave for a party at a friend-of-a-friend of Anne's. Anne and Rob stay close to each other as they walk, swaying softly, innocent in their drunkenness; you walk close to me, speak mostly to me, your hand brushes mine sometimes as we walk and sway, too, and every time my hand twitches a little, delighted and scared at your touch.

The Yellow Cab we climb in smells like tobacco and strangers and honest work, like the American Dream. I sit up front, removed from all. But at the party, we take shots and talk to friends. We go to bars to drink more as if in defiance of death, as if to disappear and to live, to laugh and talk and dance, to not, to forget.

By the end of the night we are outside ourselves, floating above and watching scenes play out like a movie we've already seen one hundred times, finding pleasure in its familiarity, surprised by the parts we don't remember.

We get home safe. I always make sure you're safe. We melt onto your couch, mingle and tangle, fill in the gaps of each other's night and of each other's body. So much contact, yet nothing more than touch. Not lips and tongues and teeth, not breasts or asses or dick or pussy. Only hands, thighs, necks, bellies, backs, arms, cheeks. But you pull my arms around you, you pull them tighter and tighter as if to keep you safe, as if I am the one boy on this Earth you trust. The only boy you ever trusted.

I try to push thoughts from my mind to yours, I try to convey my love through the tips of my fingers, the warmth of my body, the strength of my arms. You don't speak that language, or maybe you just don't wish to respond.

Soon you fall asleep on my chest, never thinking twice about what our contact means. I help you to your bed, take off your shoes. You say, Thank you, you're such a good friend. I say nothing, instead I smile a sad smile. I give you a kiss on the head and go to leave. Before I close your door you loudly whisper, Next time we'll do it. Then you laugh. I smile a smile of amusement and still sadness. Goodnight, I say and close your door.

I leave your apartment alone. I walk down your hallway alone, ride down eleven stories alone, walk through the lobby alone, walk home alone, ride up four stories alone, walk down my hallway alone, get into bed alone, and fall asleep. Alone. All the while I think of you.

*Things I Should Have Told You*

I need to be told I'm loved.

You were the beginning of me and you may be the end.

Everything I did was for you. I don't know, maybe it was all for me.

I'm sorry.

The truth is that you did love me. You loved me more than I loved you. You loved me more than I ever thought I loved you.

I'm sorry.

*In Your Epicenter (II)*

In the beginning you said to me, You don't have to say sorry to me. Back then I said it all

the time. Every word I said, every text I wrote, every email I drafted was meticulous, calculated. I had to impress you always. If ever I sent something or said something prematurely or imperfectly, I would apologize. And you would say, Don't say sorry to me.

I was grateful for it then. But now I am trapped in it. Trapped in my own inability to apologize. The first time I pushed you, you cried and screamed and yelled. We were drunk and stoned and I didn't know what I was doing. Soon I was laying next to you pulling you to me, but I could no longer pull you into me. I said, I'm so sorry. This is so fucked up. This is all my fault. You said, Don't apologize to me. We cried and we fucked and we fell asleep.

You texted me one night. It was close to the end. You sent, *i need you here right now*. I replied, *b thr in a lil*.

When I came in, you were sitting on the kitchen floor. I walked toward you and you got up and hugged me. You pulled me into you and didn't let go. I could smell alcohol on your breath and it calmed me. We began stripping each other and kissing each others' bodies. You did not stop crying and this too comforted me. Our heartbeats began to line up as we molded into each other, we were like play-doh people mushed together at the hips, there was too much of the others' color in each of us, we were no longer our own.

The next morning you texted me, *u r my density*. I wasn't sure what it meant but I knew you hadn't meant *destiny*. I looked density up in the dictionary. Number seven read, Complexity of structure or content.

In the end, when I watched *Back to the Future* for the first time, I realized the reference. I always thought you were telling me truths, but you were telling me jokes, and now I wonder what the difference is.

*The End*

Do you remember the first night we almost fucked? I asked you what the consequences would have been. You said, The world would have ended, idiot. As if there would have been an atomic reaction. I never cared about that, though. I couldn't help but desire it. To be caught up in you, to be at the epicenter of our atomic explosion, to be responsible for taking away, for wiping everything out in our beautiful wake.

You were right. The world ended. But it wasn't our explosion, it was mine. I hadn't noticed that you had been exploding in slow motion all along. That I was caught in your epicenter all along. And that now, in my explosion, I had destroyed you. You were gone.