

The Clock Struck

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The room is dark. The lights are off and the sun is dropping in the sky against the white of the wall. The sun falls, and the room turns black. It twists black. Did you hear me? I said it twists black, and my mind twists black with it. I feel it in round dark eyes that refuse to stop. The curtains don't move because there's no wind. It's hot and there's no sound. I'm sitting here on an old grey sofa watching darkness twist on. All the lights off.

I'm jello head. My mind a raspberry mold that sits on Thanksgiving dinner tables waiting to be digested. Every few moments we add more water to my sloshing red pail. My brain is 59 celebrating funerals every weekend, cellular destruction.

The room grows darker. The lights off. The room is small and gets smaller and twists. The old grey couch bleeds styrofoam where scissors are stabbed in its stomach. The chair in the corner lies against its broken leg. A dead plant seeps from the sides of its cracked shell. The lights are off and no one who breathes, but me, sees or feels.

But the ground was so close. I supposed I was small. Definitely small. And I laid in the dark till you hoisted me up. And we peed on a dirt road, and took shots of vodka and lime at the bar. Your questions flew into an empty cup I annihilated with my fist which bled a red entrance star which they stamped on my thigh which I washed off during my a.m. bath. I scrubbed with oatmeal soap. Morning poked a blunt puncture. I still couldn't stand. I was sure my teeth were falling out so I looked in the mirror. I was too young to see you there.

Across from the old grey couch is the mirror. I can see its length from where I sit, and my face in the dark mapped by your tracks. I reach over the arm of the couch, pick up the clock and hurl it at the wall. The hardness whimpers. The hands are dead at one o'clock. Your face broken.

And we took turns on the nitrous tank. It was like, I could see my face from another point of view: the twisted thick smile, the large nose, the face with sunken eyes, and the past, and my face, and my eyes, and you, and if I could see your face again I'd cut it with a knife and pop out molasses-colored eyes like burnt bread stuck in a toaster . . . but I'm only a worn woman eating the dust of memories. Licking yellowed thoughts.

And the room is always darker. I have a splitting headache. I think I'm atomic. I feel like I'm going to fall. But not as bad as yesterday. I'm complacent. They've plugged me into a typewriter, but what they didn't know is that my parts are defective and my warranty expired. I continually type periods

Dark-eyed man, I used to own a cell of your company stock, and every so often it went off like a slot machine in Vegas and I thought I was going to hit the jackpot. But it never came. All in my imagination, perhaps? I lost all my money.

Now the clock's broken. I'm scared. I try to revert to egg form. My plates and glasses are all smashed against the wall next to the mirror. And my stuffed friends are laying all over the floor. Legs and arms . . . black shiny eyes and big smiles looking up at me. I sink in their sound. None.

And the sun fell on the afternoon, and on the dry dust of "Ottos." Bikes in grove sat by the door, and shone their bright metal against the air and through eyes. Those in leather and jeans hugged us and smiled. Everyone and their family sat in the large field behind "Ottos." Me and you held hands and picked yellow and brown flowers in the wide but full round circles within the tall grass. Once a year as years smoothed by we sat, talked, and laughed till night and the grass grew cool.

Long ago, after you died, I drove plastic shopping carts against slowly burning markets and ate hormonal ham on Sunday evenings after services I pretended to hear. But it doesn't mean that myself nor the woman next door, who invites her husband to sleep over after Uncle Gary, Uncle Tom, Uncle Steve, Uncle Dick, Uncle Bob, and Uncle John have left to watch wide screen football in the local bar, and drink cocktails with the bubble-mouthed blond who slurps like a guppy, care. Why? Are we supposed to? Am I Am I?

I'm only an old woman on an old couch that doesn't move, in a room that's twisting a dark shade, which is as dark as Theda Bara's lips and your eyes. And sometimes I wake up screaming, in the middle of the night, on the floor. And it's so real. Like someone's next to me. Someone standing and watching. Someone breathing . . . I smell familiar cologne. . . not really. But sometimes I wish.

Actually, the walls are white and mute. They cannot whimper. No response, but the soundless screams of me slightly reverberated in my brain. My whimper.

I've lost control over sequence. I've lost control over thought. If my fangs were longer I'd gouge myself . . . this . . . there's . . . none . . . control . . . I'm the old woman hid, sometimes knocking on the sides of my box, within feeling your lips somewhere traveling the width of my stomach, the length of my body, somewhere, before. But I'm alone. They are afraid they may get it. They will.

I want to go to sleep. My skin's dry, and it cracks, and it breaks. "Good night, Teddy." His plastic eyes never close.