

Storm Warning
By Sarah Latonas

There is a storm coming. The forecast hangs in the air, resonating, and I want so badly to pretend that I did not hear it, but that would be ignorance. There is disquiet in my mind, a feeling of menace that increases second by second. I can feel the clouds forming, see their blackness blotting out the sky with flickering lightning and icy rain, hear the hail pelting down as the wind howls and the water begins to rise. I can sense the power of it, the mindless fury just beyond the horizon, and I am filled with foreboding.

I go upstairs, taking the steps two at a time as though I could escape from my knowledge, my imagination predicting a future that becomes my reality. But time moves faster still, shadows lengthening and shifting across the walls and floor until they merge together and the air turns blue and dim with dusk. I reach the top step and turn left into my bedroom as the last light of the sun winks out below the horizon. It is so still, so impossibly silent, as though the whole world has gone deaf, is holding its breath as it waits for the wind to shift. I pull myself to my knees on my bed and part the curtains to look out, fearing that I will see thunder clouds boiling toward me. But the sky is clear, fading rapidly into night as the world disappears into blackness. The clouds are only in my mind. I let the curtains close, fall back, and close my eyes.

I sleep. In my dreams I feel the storm drawing nearer, the clouds slipping silently across the sky, black as night and flickering with lightning. I am electric with tension, thrumming with nerves as my heart pounds and my fingers clench into fists. It is the not knowing that kills me, my imagination running free of the bounds of reality, too uncertain to be sure. When the tension becomes too much, I fall through my uneasy dreams and open my eyes in the darkness, pulling myself to my knees so that I can peer out through the window. It is utterly still outside, the sky so black that it could be hiding anything. I try to picture blue sky but cannot, my mind full of clouds so thick they have become a different type of night, one that does not fade when dawn breaks.

I turn away from the window and try to sleep, but it is hard to relax, anticipating the thunder that will wake me at any moment. In the morning I will have to rise and bike to work in the wind and cold, rain drenching me to the bone as I fight to keep myself upright and moving forward. I try to blink the image away, but it follows me back into my dreams, the storm howling all around me as the minutes slowly blur towards morning.

I open my eyes as my alarm goes off and am instantly awake, the curtains throwing blue shadows across the room. I sit up and pull them open, resigned, sure of what I will see. But outside the sun is blinding. The sky is wide and blue and endless above green grass, the trees bursting with leaves, summer in an instant. The storm has passed me by in the night, or perhaps was never real at all. I should be relieved, but as I ready myself for the day ahead, the start of a new rotation, another first day in an endless procession of first days, the tension still burns at the back of my mind. And still I wait, knowing the storm must come.