

The Last Ice Age

Samuel J Fox

It is raining everywhere: on Western Boulevard and sloshing down Varsity. Pools of chilled rainwater surround Mission Valley. Neon signs blaze in the downpour, somewhat angelic with probable warmth. It's a good night to disappear. It's a good night to become a fog and float through the campus, under street lamps orange like glowing sulfur. The wind moves like a glacier: almost solid, but so slow if it weren't for the way it cut through hoodies and coats when it did move, no one would ever realize it was there.

And where is God in all of this? With sirens and wailing, an ambulance nearly hydroplanes to get around and through an intersection of stopped cars. Pedestrians huddle as they walk, heads bent down as though in prayer or fear for the rain. Where is God? I wish I could say; I haven't prayed for anything but to survive the coming winter and find a better paying wage. Homeless winters are harsh, slow, and often, even when spring does arrive, begrudgingly but constant, the chill inside the bones stays long up until summer.

I haven't seen snow since last year. It is mid-November and the world is an icicle waiting to descend. All I can think about the past twelve hours: why do we suffer so gracelessly? I don't tell my friends I'm struggling to pay rent. I owe so much to people and not enough to the world. No one owes me anything but company. It gets so lonely living a life where an art consumes you from the inside out, like blossoming or escaping so weak a cocoon, but not many acknowledge, at least in your close circle, what it's like to struggle against depression.

In New York, I suppose, it is colder. Windier. The love I thought would last me my life is there, happy, I hope, bundled up next to a radiator with her cat, maybe the new love of her life, and sleeps soundlessly as the dark bleats against the window. I haven't thought of her in a month or three and it's becoming easier to forget. That she loved me. That we loved each other. Either way, neither of us talk to one another anymore. There's long been a frozen lake between us and the bridge has just recently burnt down.

I am, at this point, soaked. I've been walking for what seems like thirty minutes in the rain, socks drenched to my toe bones. Phalanges is such a funny word for tiny bones. My toes are becoming infinitesimal glaciers. And my feelings floating through my body and face and outward like an aurora borealis.

I've fucked up more than enough times in my life to know when a storm is brewing. My life: a holocaust of ice—you can only see ten percent of its entirety. So cold it burns at times. But, still, I keep sloshing through this air. Still, I admit to my mistakes. I admit that some things could not have been prevented either: my depression over not being good enough; my having been taken advantage of by a soft-faced boy at a party who roofied my drink; my relationship with my family, having not told them why I was so angry all these years. At them. At God. At love.

It begins to sleet. I can hear it, a near-plastic ping as it hits the leaves: more solid, more thrush than thrash. My life is one alike: more aflush with cold and timidity than I'd like to admit. They say the last ice age only lasted nine and a half thousand years. Mine is only nineteen years long.



Bon Iver

"Holocene"

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It will end tonight. I am lighting a bonfire in a backyard now. With friends and cigarettes and whiskey. We call this ritual. The first solid, frozen precipitation concludes with fire. The embers are so hot and warm it feels like a homecoming. It feels like, not burning, but comfort during all conclusive loneliness. There goes Matt making a joke about dying as though death were all there is to be worried about. There goes JS singing a song only they know the full lyrics too. There goes Katrina, laughing and cajoling over the latest tragedy that is not a tragedy but a setback so trivial she's laughing now. Even the ghosts in our shadows are dancing.

It ends tonight, this ice age, this slow, tumultuous churning through permafrost, the hunting for fire, the salvaging for anything but meaning to our lives. We are not special in our belonging. We are not special in our suffering. We are individual heirs to what comes after. Whatever that may be. Not magnificent; but you can see it coming from the horizon as the sun dawns and the fire stays lit into the morning. I will find meaning in the cigarettes scattered into a pattern like an arrowhead. It will point toward true north or wherever the soul seeks to forget suffering. I will put down my smoldering butt. I will go home. Home is where I make it, somewhere on this earth. Somewhere not far and where spring is bleeding into the landscape its color and the frost is all but remaining.