

PROMPT: You had developed a habit of sleepwalking. But you weren't alone now — it seemed like the whole town had started sleepwalking at night, too.

Sleepwalking Obliteration

by **Kat McKay**

Selene watches the coffee percolate, drip slowly into the glass pot, each ripple of dark and spiced warmth warbling over itself in the Wednesday morning light, the sides of the pot steam opaque, trickles of condensation gather and run into each other. Selene straightens, peels herself from the counter and shuffles, in the foothills of a hangover, into the shower. She wrenches the knob open as hot as it goes, sticks a forearm under the tap, testing. She sloughs off her sweats, clambers in, and swishes the beer-sweat from her body. She lets the hot water run out, then hops out, shivering and stripped of several layers of grime, cocoons herself in a towel. She glides back through the kitchen, stopping to pour herself a first cup of coffee. She dresses hurriedly: the not quite broken in acid-washed jeans of the Fall line scrape against her hips, the chunky emerald sweater with the cutout in the back muffles the now-permeating coffee notes as she pulls it over her head. Her hair is blowdried, her face beaten into something presentable. She stops to hold Indy, still curled and napping on the couch, his tail tucked over his nose. She can hardly see him in the mornings since his coat is so dark, only his electric blue eyes reflecting the microwave clock. She scoops and cradles him, but he remains stubbornly asleep, or at least pretends to. Selene checks her teeth in her bathroom mirror, even though she hasn't eaten anything today, pours coffee into her thermos, and grabs her apron, walkietalkie, and keys on the way out. She won't be late today.

Selene sits in her tired, nondescript little '05 black sedan, feeling her car rock with each whoosh of a particle of outbound traffic shooting away from the city, just four feet to her left. She can almost feel the breeze of its passing through the thin and curved window. She watches the headlights of each car grow brighter and brighter, imprinting their own suns on her retinas, the afterimage confetti broken by each next impending sun. She angles her head away, watches

the stream of red taillights fade to soft and independent motes. Inbound traffic is staunchly unmoving, a wreck further in than Selene can see.

Sometime later, she glides into work fifteen minutes late, anticipating Katie's wrath. Her palms sweat: she is always late, always receives Katie's excruciating signature look of disapproval coupled with her rehearsed sermon on company values. Today, Katie drones, her monologue delivered soft-spoken, monotonous in its intensity. Taken alone, none of her phrases make sense to Selene: "intersecting planes of continual understanding," "tightly-woven threads of communication," imperfect acronyms that scaffold empty space. Selene understands only that she is deeply and irrevocably flawed, unable to claw herself into the shape of a Good Employee, to hold the rictus of customer-service smile. She is monstrous anathema in the eyes of Corporate.

Properly chastened, she reties her apron, connects her walkie-talkie to the network, beams of something that squawk and catch, staticky from frictioned resistance in the air waves. She moves onto the floor, begins straightening the first rack of hoodies. S S L M XS L M XXL XXXL becomes XS S S M M L XXL XXXL, mental spaces held empty for when she returns, arms laden with restocking hoodies, ripened fruits of the Back Room. She circles the floor, her steps habitually patterned to skirt each rack, every shelf and cubby. The tags blur, and she risks forgetting where the gaps of purchased items are, forcing an unforgivably inefficient second circuit of the sales floor. *welcome to forever 21, can I help you find anything today*, she murmurs listlessly the few times a customer enters her peripheral vision. She counts on their polite refusals, since she cannot help them.

By the time she has completed one restocking circuit, enough customers have filtered through to warrant a second loop. Well, The Lord hath chastised her, and he weaves the invisible nets that join her into the network of the walkie-talkie. The waves might have broken: Katie shouts for a network reset, echoing off the tiled ground. Turn it off, take it out of itself, out of the static frictioned in the air, the resistance of the waves. Then turn it back on again. Selene moves on the floor, racks tanks. The matter of the empty spaces is held, her arms laden with tanks, a restocking of the ripened fruits. She scans, comes habitually patterned to the coat rack, every shelf and cubby. The tags a steep slope, and the danger of forgetting where they belong compels an unforgivably slack third round of the sales floor. *can help you find today*, she mouths into their peripheral complaints. It is only recently that a customer has begun to enter her peripheral vision. She is in good taste with her many refusals, because she is unable to help.

Selene loops around about again, filtering herself through enough customers. The lesson will spread over the net, in order to join the network invisible. "The water could be solved," Katie shouts, echoes returning on tiled earth. Turn it off, take them away, outside the air, the resistance of the waves. Then turn it back on again. She moves. The empty bay is full of

material fruit ripening. Now in the store is a huge man in a patterned coat. He goes to each rack habitually, all the shelves and cubbies. The tags are in steep and urgent danger of sinking in her fourth round of the sales floor. This time, the man's faces ask *can I help you*, and find their own grievances fixed in her replies. She marvels so much lately at her manner of catching someone in her own peripheral vision. Those pertaining to Him, those who deny the death chamber, she can not help.

There are no clocks in the Forever 21, by design. Watches are against dress code. Selene, lost in the racks, starts when Diana, her replacement, sidles into her peripheral vision, touches her lightly on the shoulder, her cue to clock out. Selene shakes herself, tries to flush the hellish and permeating smell of retail from her nostrils, windows down on the drive home. The inbound lanes are still backed up, but the outbound lanes are clear, so she flies home in record time. She watches the headlights of each car stalled to her left, imprinting their own afterimage confetti on her retinas, each impending sun whooshing past in her own wake. She watches the stream of red taillights fade to soft and independent motes ahead through her thin and curved windshield.

She boils pasta, forks it numbly into her mouth, curled on the couch with Indy purring in the hollow of her stomach. Something inconsequential is on the TV, washing her in blue light and muted voices. She cracks a beer, taking long pulls at each commercial break, burping as the foam hits her carb-filled stomach. She pulls the quilted throw over both her and Indy, drifts to sleep with her contacts still in.

Selene wakes sticky, planted in front of the glass vessel. She is the turning-point of each of the darkneses to the light, to the morning light. She watches the tearing of the cup, the steaming of the pot, the fourth side of a dark place condensing in her mind. It flows, and by herself, she gathers it in, breathes it in. Selene peels and sections herself, attempts to molt in the shower. She takes a hot breath in the open, and the knob of consequence does not fit under the elbow of her hand stuck in the tap. She clammers out in a sweat, hoppy beer flows from the pores in her body. Removal of the hot water immediately vanishes the horror caked into several layers of dirt and stripped wire. She wraps the towel around her.

And again, I will pour out the former unto thee. Glide over a cup of coffee, set by itself beside the sink. Presently, her clothes are broken in: acid-washed jeans and the Fall of Religion, not cut tight enough to scrape against the line of her hips. She is muffled now, spent at each coffee mark pulling over her head. Blowdried hair falls into her face, hits on something presentable. She has ceased to hold Indy: he is still curled up and napping on the couch, tail tucked on nose. She is barely able to see his morning coat, dark, reflecting only his electric blue eyes from the microwave clock.

She that abideth not in the stubbornness of their hearts goeth only and forever to sleep. At least that is a lie. Nor is it without the cradle. In the meantime, she dug it out. Selene checks beneath her for the next reflection in the bathroom mirror, even though she had been waiting and continuing to fast. She pours the coffee in the thermos and grabs her towel, walkie-talkie and keys. She will not be late today.

And thou shalt never experience her passing, be she yet almost at the cool of the day. Your Selene sits in the tired little black chariot, feeling that outbound traffic from the city. She feels an element, routed ancient Rock, whoosh, just at her feet, far to the left. She watches each car headlight: brighter and brighter growth that makes its own impression on her retina, each glow and afterimage broken in sunlight impending. Her head turned to the corner, watched stream-red taillights fade to soft floating and independent motes. She who knows herself, clinging to the constants of traffic crashes of the universe, she sees farther than from the wreck of Selene. After, she enters work fifteen minutes late, anticipating Katie's anger. Her palms sweat, she is always late, always takes Katie's signature crimson shades of face, a rehearsed sermon coupled with the rejection of society. Today, drones deliver her monologue softly, intense in its monotonousness.

Be taken alone. No one knows her phrases: "the understanding of the secants of the plane figures continued, the weavings of the communications are well fortified, an empty space is imperfect, product lost."

*In order to have a thorough knowledge of every thing, expect to be restored. Fail to hold the jaws of the vices of Her service. Not a nail in Her good palms. Her laughter is a species that propagates itself. Corporate is a monster with anathema eyes. Well, The Lord hath chastised her, and the nets almost join in forming. She is broken for the use of the ground. She shouts, takes her out of herself, out of the staticky friction in the air, the resistance of the waves. *How can I help you find today.* She catches herself shouting the few times in a customer enters her peripheral vision. She is full of many refusals, because she herself is unable to help. Well, the lesson will spread the net, join the intangible network. The water could be solved, an echoing return filtered through earth. Turn it off, take it away, outside the friction of the air, the resistance of the waves. Then turn it back on again. The empty bay is full of fruit ripening. She is in steep and urgent danger of sinking. *It can help you find today.* She prays for their complaints. It is a matter of peripheral vision. For those who deny the death chamber, neither of them can help.*

Spread the net, in order to join the network to the invisible. Echo returns tiled on the ground. Turn it off, take away those without air resistance waves. Then turn it back on again. Vigor. The void is a bay full of ripening fruit matter.

Now there is a huge abundance of Man. She goeth into the heights with urgency and taketh herself into torments with all the shadows. This time the face of a man will ask for help. It is certain that she ought to say something of marvels when a man is in her peripheral vision. I will be able to help you. Those with her are no great help. They deny the death of the chamber on high. The hands of the clocks are not there, and Selene is lost in the racks. Diana, derived from the clock, touches her lightly on her shoulder. Selene flies home, opens all the windows in the house. And she will keep feeling the impression of her heartbeat flashing in the headlights: confetti and snowy vision.

She prepared her long trains of chariots of abuse, shining in the retinas of her eyes. Each instant of the past is recalled by the way of the sun trapped in the whooshing stir. Look out of the same bank of red taillights.

Her own master is growing old. First down floating in the soft air, thin and curved feathers. She feels numbness at the subjugation of her flesh-hooks, the swelling sores both in the measures of her mouth and all curled up in the hollow of her belly. Light is patterning on TV, its burnt cracks blue and muted. She muscles through each burped attack, drifts to sleep, still in contact with each commercial break.

Selene wakes, faint and flexible, planted in front of the glass vessel. She will keep each sunrise in a pot, the side of each dark to light, light of morning star. Steaming is the cup of the tearing of the sky, it is condensing from the dark too, in the fourth part of her mind. It flows through her, and she read it in the spirit. Selene sections herself, molts under the spirit of heat. Taken in the open, the knob of her hand will be stuck at the elbow, the consequence following sacrifice. The sweat from the pores of her body soon disappears, and shivering limbs are removed and stripped of several layers of warm droppings. *And again, I will pour out the former for you.* Soon football and religion intersect in lines tight enough to encase the patient. The only sign of age is ceremony, and the aura over the head of everyone. She is barely able to see in the dark, reflecting only the blue eyes of the electric microwave. *Cursed be she that abideth not for ever in the imagination of her own heart.* They went to go to sleep, but she is not going. In the meantime, the cradle has been dug. Muse Selene checks the mirror, though she had been waiting and continuing to fast. It is Her day, and *She catcheth away that which She pours.* She will not be late today. *And thou shalt not go as far as in the passage they do: but be near at the cool of the day.*

Your Muse became tired of the little black chariot, sees her feet far to the left. The headlight guards itself, growing brighter and brighter in the pressure, breaking its own afterimage southwest of the impending light. *Turn to the head of the stream as the soft sun fades, red-*

floating and independent. She sees further from the base of the world, into the constant shipwreck crashes of the universe, she who knows herself clinging to Selene. *And her sweat was Palm Sunday, and She hid Herself amid the shadows of the late face which has ever been the foundation, twice-dyed scarlet. Let me be united towards a society of rejection.* Today, the drones deliver a monologue slowly and deeply. *None were captured.* No one knows her phrases. To be understood is one of the planes continued, well fortified, so that the empty space is an imperfect act, is lost in a product. *I will not hold my jaws, my teeth for diseases, for what form of laughter spreads through the body, through anathema monster eyes.* We do not nail through its exterior. *What use is broken ground?* she cries out, takes for herself. *What more can I do to help you today?* Form some dome over us. Turn it off, take it outside the friction of the air resistance waves. Then turn it back on again. It dwarfs the bay full of ripening fruit. *It can help you find today.* It is harvested from the material spawning in her peripheral vision. For those who deny the death of the chamber on high, we are able to offer profit to them. *Spread the net, in order to join the network to the invisible.* Turn it off, remove the air waves without resistance. Then turn it back on again. *There is now a huge abundance of Man. She earnestly knows for herself that she goes with every torture, and takes away the shadows of the heights.* At this time the face of the will of the man asks for help. He is assured that *I will not be able to help you. I can not oppose the death in the chamber.* The hands of clocks and Selene, touching shoulder to shoulder, slightly struck by lightning, stepping into home. She runs, opens all the windows in the house, keeps feeling pressure pounding, flashing her headlights on, confetti-cold and snowy vision. *Trains run on the retina of the eye. Thus in times past the moments of the sun are trapped in the parts of the body to be moved.* The same river of red taillights. *Master the aging man,* but first a soft floating in the air, thin and curved feathers, the forks and shovels of astonishment. *We are all curled up in a certain rule and measure of all things,* patterning foam, blue and the muted burnt cracks. Selene drifts to sleep.

Selene wakes sorrowful and stiff, planted in front of the glass vessel. *Keep the light of the sunrise in the morning, the light of the dark side, of each and both sides of the vessel.* The splitting of the cup of the steam which is from heaven: that is favorable to use. In the darkness she, too, is condensing. She flows through it in spirit. *Find the sections that have failed him, the soft skins in the heat, stuck in the open hand and knotted elbow.* Soon the sweat pores disappear from shivering members, several layers of warm droppings stripped and removed. *And again, I will pour out the former. Enough patience intersects a place of repose.* The heads of the information age: ceremony, soil, and air. It can barely be seen in the dark. *Cursed be she that confirmeth not all the same things for ever in the imagination of her own heart.* And she went on to continue her journey, but she will not go to sleep, she will not go. In the meantime, the cradle and the well are spun out of glass, though she had been waiting and continuing to

fast. And today, she grabs the one who pours. She is one day late. *And thou shalt not come.* Black alighted from her feet, streaming to the left. Headlights guard themselves, brighter and brighter with pressure increasing, breaking the illusion of light. Turn the head of the stream as the sun leaves: soft, red-floating, and independent. *Farther away from the world she doth see a shipwreck which is constituted out of fear. It cometh as the universe and what She knows.*

They adhere to Selene as her sweat becomes Palm Sunday. *One other arising out of the shadows where he hath hid his face, the foundations of which were yet the spirits that have always existed, scarlet double-dyed.* Today, drones deliver a sermon slower than the internet. *None were captured. No one knows his phrases.* It must be a continuation of the planes. *The void is an imperfect product. The laughter of the teeth of disease will not be silent. The light passes from the body out of the jaws of the monsters in the eyes of that which was accursed. For what end are we broken: but to water the land and the streets?* She cries out, takes the Host to help form a dome above us. Turn off the extra friction of the resistance of the air waves. Then turn it back on again. There is a bay full of ripening dwarf fruits. *It can help you.* She denied peripheral vision in the death chamber. You spread the net, in order to join to the network to the invisible. Turn it off, remove the waves in the air without any resistance. Then turn it back on again. There is already a huge abundance of Man. As the sun takes away the shadows of the hills, she knows that it is torturous to be of great importance. She can not deny the chamber on high, death in the hands of clocks.

Selene, stepping lightly, touches home. She runs, opens all the windows in the house, keeps feeling pressure pounding on her flashing headlights, confetti, a cold and snowy vision. Thus, in times past, the movements of the parts of the body were taken with the sun moving through them. Dreams of ruling had blended into her. Before, she was soft, thin, and blasted with the curve of feathers floating in the air. But now the shovels, the fleshhooks, the roaring of her in admiration. All of us have curled up in a kind of rule and measure of all things. Patterned in a chip of linen and blue, the same is suppressed, with the burnt-offerings and the cracks. Selene drifts to sleep.