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## Glass: A Prose Poem

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## GLASS: A PROSE POEM

### *I. Afternoon*

Eight jade colored bottles sit empty on the windowsill. Beside the bed. Sifting the afternoon sunlight. I stand in the doorway. Floorboards worn. Clothing strewn across the room.

Try to forget.

Forget how more was the first word either of us learned.

Hands stretched out to grasp tightly onto something a few inches out of reach.

I was always dreaming of leaving.

He was always wanting another reason to stay.

Walk over to the window.

Open it. Pitch the bottles out onto the asphalt driveway below.

One at a time. He flinches in his sleep.

There is a sense of relief.

Today we are nothing but shards of glass glittering green against the ice.

Broken.

### *II. Hours earlier*

Stumble to the kitchen in the dark, feet cold on the linoleum floor.

Reach for a blue glass. Fill it with water.

Pull my phone from the charger.

Find his name on the screen.

Ice throbs cold in my veins.

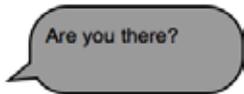
Read his words.



Sucked in air quickly. Let it fill my lungs.

Try to shake the chills from my shoulders. Trip back upstairs to get dressed. Watch the sharp inhale/exhale beneath my ribcage in the second before I pull a sweater over my cold skin.

Phone buzzes another time against the vanity. Hands too shaky for eyeliner.



My eyes close. Then open. I type quickly: "I'm here" and hit send. "You probably think less of me. I'm sorry for being a mess" I translated, his words like a toddler's when they've had too little sleep, too much stimulation. Back down the thirteen stairs, instant coffee tastes like sawdust yet the clock embedded in the microwaves said I was running out of time. Time. Added that to my list of things that are forever not enough.

Outside the morning so sharp it feels like someone took an x-acto knife to it. During my drive to school I listen to Sufjan Stevens, drumming my fingers

against the steering wheel. The best part about these too early mornings is the sunrise, all explosive cameos between the monolith buildings.

His best friend slipped away last night. Mine was torn away the autumn of 8th grade. Loss is loss. Gone is gone. Whether it's lungs that give up on breathing or the screaming of cars colliding head on; the dreams of those in the passenger seat, in the hospital bed, they don't stop bleeding.

After school I had driven to his house. The surrounding streets are all named after trees that don't grow there.

### *III. Now*

I stand in the bedroom after pitching the bottles, while he rolls over I keep staring out the window, cold air icy in my lungs, breath like dragon smoke trying to choke me. More. More. More. One more morning that we are both alive. I shut the window and trace shapes in the condensation.

They used to ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up. They still do, actually, just in a different way. A way that demands a logical answer. 2pm. Today. The answer came as his hurricane eyes flickered opened in confusion, as all the pain came back to him like a punch, hiding his face in his hands, whispering my name; like a prayer, like an SOS flashed out across an ocean of sadness. I traced the word on the window. "Enough." I want to be enough when I grow up. Enough to bridge all the canyons that stood between where we are and where we should be. Enough to fill the empty baseball caps of the homeless people on the street corners. Enough that those beer bottles could be refilled. Enough. Enough. Enough. Without ever feeling empty. I wanted to be shattered glass. I wanted to have everything and nothing. To be everywhere and nowhere at all. To be fiercely sharp and effortlessly beautiful. To catch the sunlight and forgive gravity.

Smokey the cat jumped onto the windowsill, I held her in my arms.

"You didn't have to come" he said, sitting up, smoothing the blankets which looked like the aftermath of a tornado. I shrugged. "I belong here."

Our eyes met. The way we looked at each other could burn cigarette holes in the curtains. We had spent most of our lives standing next to each other. On the swing set, in the hallways at school, on our walks, on the train rides to the city. When these moments where we stood iris to iris happened all the things we never said to anyone else were spelled out in our expressions.

I shrugged. "Okay" he said. "Okay" I replied. It had taken so much time for him to accept that he needed to let people be there for him in the way he was there for them. He stretched, then motioned to a spot on the bed. I sat, cross legged, patch of sunlight on my shoulder, Smokey wiggling in my arms. "Tell me a story about him" I whispered. His eyes closed "I don't know where to start. It isn't linear."

"Start at the beginning. We have time" and it was true, that day we did. Time stretched all the way out ahead of us like a roll of film. It didn't matter. What mattered was restoring any bit of okay that I could find, sweeping the glass into a pile. After awhile his eyes opened, and leaning forward, he began.

"The first time I remember Jack was at the playground in second grade. All the kids called me 'Ghost Boy' because I liked being alone. Well, liking aloneness was probably learned, maybe it would be more accurate to say that I was alone. In the hallways, on the playground. During recess the bullies would jeer at me, even though I wasn't hurting anyone or even making my existence known. One day the biggest kid decided that they should prove once and for all if I actually was a ghost. According to him you couldn't punch a ghost. I was bigger than everyone else then, but skinny--"

"Then?" I interjected, nudging him in the shoulder and he laughed quietly.

He was nearly a foot and a half taller than me, legs dangling off the edge of the bed, arm dangerously close to mine.

"Funny. I was scared but I tried not to let anyone see that. And so he punched me. Hard, in the cheekbone. Smugly, he claimed he hadn't felt a thing. Suddenly Jack ran up to my side, small scrawny kid that he was, he had a ton of friends because he was that kind of person. He patted me on the shoulder and called the bully a liar. Jack took the next punch, and the next. I felt sick to my stomach and ran to the bathroom for wet paper towels that smells liked dead trees. He grinned and his nose was bleeding, the teeth so white against all that blood. 'Thanks' he said. He THANKED me. And from that day forward he would hangout with me on the playground, him and his other band of misfits. We were all we needed. We were enough."

Smokey jumped from my lap to his and curled up. I digested the story."Then I moved in during the summer before fourth grade and everyone said I was stalking you guys but that completeness was something I craved after the divorce" I added. He reached out and touched my shoulder. "You were this crazy tough girl and we were all scared shitless."

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We heard steps on the stairs and his brother Mike poked his head through the half opened door. Mike's face was a mixture of confusion and concern, taking in the scene, us sitting on the bed, close but not touching, Smokey was sleeping now, the sun getting low outside the window.

"Are you hungry? Pizza just arrived." Mike asked awkwardly. "Yeah, I am" We stood up, the bed creaking. he turned to me "Are you?" I shook my head, walking over to his Xbox. "Call of Duty when you're done eating?" I asked. His lips formed something like a smile and he said "Only if you feel losing" but then the sadness of his statement, the other meaning, hung in the air and we both felt it.

"Eh, I'll let you win this one maybe" I grinned.

We played for awhile, me whining when I lost, holding the controller at odd angles not actually beneficial to my gaming performance. After the second game I caught him looking strangely at the windowsill, the sky still pink around the edges in the wake of the sunset. "Didn't I have.... wasn't I really.... what happened to the beer bottles?" I set my controller down and stood up.

"Let's go for a walk" I suggested, finding my coat on the desk. "To the lake, we haven't been there in too long. He followed me out his bedroom door, down the thirteen steps and into the yellow kitchen. While he searched for his leather coat, I found the dust pan inside the cabinet under the sink. He looked puzzled, yet understood when we walked onto the sagging side porch. The broken glass looked differently in the porch lights, warmer. "Oh" he said simply. "I was angry" I explained, bending down to sweep the shards into the pan, little chunks of ice getting mixed in. "Hold on" he said, returning in a minute with a mason jar from the kitchen. I handed him the dust pan and he slid the little jade green glitter into the jar, holding it up to the light.

"It's beautiful in a broken way" he noticed and I agreed.

We walked down the Maple Street, like wounded soldiers on their way home. To the lake where our gang had spent hours and hours. Before we lost Sabrina. And now Jack. Before our lives hit the asphalt. The lake was frozen solid. We took off running until we hit the steps that led down. The night was a clear blue, stars being kind to the suburban sky.

We walked all the way out to the center of the lake, slipping and catching each other on the ice. I laid down, every molecule in my body so cold it burned. He laid down next to me. "Doesn't it scare you? That we can never keep this moment? That

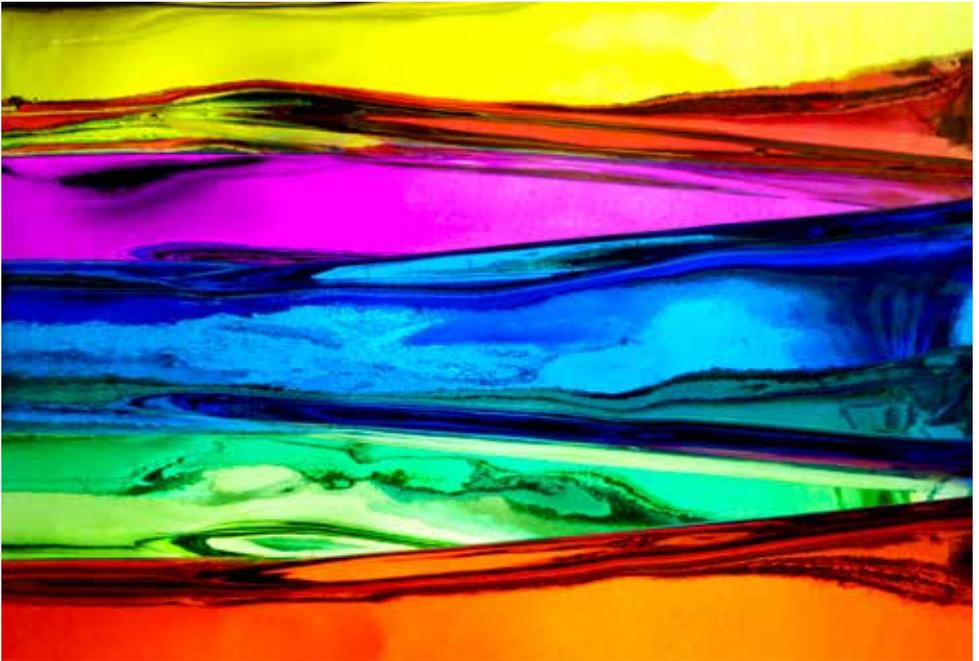
time doesn't stop for people like you and me?" I asked. "It's the scariest thing in the universe" He reached out and held my hand.

"Max."

"Katherine."

We'd been doing this since we were children.

Saying each other's names as statements. As if we were complete.



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