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Fade to Winner

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Kroger: Fade to Winner

continued their mournful rounds, and he stepped into the hallway, descended the stairs, and approached his wife. He bent his head, and sat down beside her, the stair creaking under his weight. She turned and looked upon his face with heavy eyes. His pained eyes offered a stillness beyond words and memory. She dropped her head to his shoulder. A simple caress of tear-stained cheeks and shaking hands had led them to breach an unknowable gulf.

Watching his father approach the woman and seeking a comfort not found in the peeling image, the son slowly descended the stairs and inched his way besides his father and the woman. He wound his tiny palm around theirs, and his father and stepmother squeezed the soft, shaking hand of the son. His coughs had escalated into a choking mourning, and the cries of three had joined, and in unison, ushered in a twilight song, a funeral rite.

The three held their attention on the silent infant. The ruffles of the snow-white linen cloth pulsed and danced like rattled branches in the whispered wind. Here, too, was a peace transcendent. Here, too, was a thread of life. Each pressed their forehead against the bundle, and the body had been warmed by their touch. The mother wrapped it once more, a rite of safe journey, a rite of absolution. Outside, the purple hinges of twilight had grazed the night sky.

They approached the window overlooking the veranda. The sun was painting its morning portrait at the edge of the world; the frigid forests were bent towards the rising lamp. Distant church bells ushered in the newfound dawn, and the grandfather clock continued its punctual march. Each offered praise of a cycle unknown, a destiny acknowledged, a power mysterious.

Looking out, they watched as the sun extended its rays over the forest horizon, dispelling the ghosts of the forest. Among the bold hand of death and daring grasp of darkness, a threaded stairway to heaven had been reclaimed. The three huddled closer in the frigid winter dawn and embraced the din of ringing bells and churning clock hands, a rite of rebirth.

Fade to Winter

Kristina Kroger

Splayed palms punching holes in Heaven
Our eyes crazed
Crow-feathers in our fingers.

Dancing around wildfires
weaving tattered wings of wood-smoke
we become ghost-flesh
My wind-in-the-trees brain
Decomposes with the leaves
Autumnal embers fading out of me

This elemental insanity
Has consumed me
I want to fly south with the geese