# My Glass is Waiting

*by* Alicia Aho

The ice cubes whispered and hissed as they dissolved, sibilant sounds of command that had me sitting up straight with alarm in my chair. When they went silent, it only made the conversation between the washer and the dryer downstairs seem louder in comparison. Trucks and buses whooshed past on the highway outside like tidal rhythms, swelling and dying and swelling again.

And I wondered, where did all the silence go?

At five every morning -- even on weekends, damn him -- my neighbor's alarm clock begins shrieking in a piercing, blarty tone. I've heard roosters crow at dawn, but even roosters have a sense of pitch. This alarm clock sounds like it's trying to commit suicide by means of dissonant vibration, as though ripping itself to pieces with noise would finally bring peace to the horror of its own existence.

The trouble with alarm clocks is naturally that they are miserable. And their curse is that their misery is useful: we employ them because we want to get away from them. But we would never have one as a friend.

There is a tree right outside. I can see it through the window, tossing its blossoming branches in a steadily growing wind. But I cannot hear it, though the glass is nowhere near soundproof. It is drowned out by the thunk and whirr of the heater beginning its cycle. The heater will run for some number of minutes and fill the house with its breathing, and I will turn the television volume up a little to compensate, but when the heater goes silent again the television will sound aggressively loud and I will turn it back down. But then the heater inevitably comes back on -- lather, rinse repeat.

And sometimes I marvel at the fact that we cannot close our ears,

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the way we can close our mouths or eyes. Surely there would be some evolutionary advantage in this, in being able to leave sounds aside. It would be an amazingly useful skill for the bus ride home from work, for instance.

But no -- we are doomed to hear everything. Sounds can wake us out of a sound sleep. Which brings us back to the alarm clock again. In high school I procured myself a radio alarm, so instead of blarts or sirens the clock played music from whatever station the radio dial was at when the designated time came. This seemed like a miracle invention, numinous and life-changing. I couldn't believe it had taken me seventeen years to discover such a thing existed.

I dreamed of walking around on the bottom of the ocean, mysteriously but pleasantly able to breathe. Kelp forests and giant fish in geometric shapes wafted around me as I explored. Gradually I started to sing along: *See you in September / see you when the summer's through / Here we are, saying goodbye at the station / summer vacation / is taking you away . . .*

I had a piece of paper in my hand, and I was looking for someone to decode it, but every time I opened my mouth to ask song lyrics came out. *He's a rebel and he'll never ever be / any good . . . You swear you've heard it before as it slowly rambles on and on . . .*

Wait -- where the hell was the music coming from?

I woke up. I'd overslept by an hour and a half. So much for miracles.