

Heavy Weather

by Daniel Passamaneck

Monday started warm and still: a petri dish of a morning. But low pressure formed offshore before noon and an inland breeze rose up to lose itself in the vacuum, blowing warm and dry across the city. By dusk the wind was moaning steadily over the foothills. The blue of the sky pierced her heart. She patted her lips with her tongue and turned to him. "We have to talk."

Tuesday was also dry, and very hot; the wind blew ceaselessly and strong. There was dust adrift in it - a mineral haze that blurred edges and obscured distances. The gusts were powerful enough to take down some older trees. It stung his eyes when he was outside; even indoors he could feel the house creaking. The walls around him were warm, transmitting the heat. Around sunset he stared through the window, watching the sand in the wind bouncing impotently off the glass. "Funny," he thought, "they're really the same thing."

Wednesday broke sweltering and dark, a murky epilogue to Tuesday night. The linens lay tumbled on the floor; in the light of the bedside lamp she noted the distinct sweat stains they each had left on their respective sides of the rumpled mattress cover. The wind howled, hurling sand and heat until about noon, when it suddenly stopped. The heat continued to build, though, under overcast skies, tangibly, inexorably. The humidity built as well; the windows were sweating. As evening finally fell, the words he spoke to her hung in the air like baked felt: "You always only remember the stuff you could just as easily forget."

Thursday: on the sidewalk at dawn, a sheen of damp dirt gleamed dully. The air lay hot, still and thick, a moist embrace from which she could not extricate herself. As the day crept toward a slow boil, they began to hear the rumble of real weather over the horizon.

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He'd soaked through his shirt with sweat before breakfast and nothing dried in that torpid air, not even with a window open, but at eventide a chill descended rapidly. They each shuddered at once as cold air washed through the house. A door left open in another room blew shut with a loud bang. "That door never gets closed properly," she said mostly to herself.

Friday came with an icy fog that thickened as the day matured. On the windowpane, dust left behind by the earlier sandstorm went opaque, then rolled down and away in random lugubrious droplets that cut tenuous paths of transparency down the dirty glass. As the grey went shot with blue before the evening's black, a loud crack presaged the cloudburst and then a freezing rain of tiny droplets was unleashed from the lowering sky. The streets were quickly washed clean of windblown dust as sheets of rain scoured the windows and the storm drowned the last of the daylight. He handed her his supper plate. Turning, she dropped it and it shattered on the coffee table. He hurled his cup against the curio shelves; shards scattered across the floor, glinting and sharp. "Oops," she mumbled impassively.

Saturday brought strong cold wind. The rain let up and the sky was very clear; the air was so clean it hurt to breathe. All the puddled rainwater had turned to ice. Ice caked the window and rimed the world outside. In the late afternoon they both watched as a row of clouds approached, thick and dark, stretching from horizon to horizon. At dusk, the front reached them. The air went black and their lungs seemed to empty into a pause in the screeching wind that had blown all day. Then, the deluge: heavy drops of rain and some hail, on a hard swirling wind that whipped up under the eaves, furious and invasive, drops so large and numerous the air was mostly water. The rafters groaned. "If you want anything done around here you have to do it yourself," he muttered as he lurched unsteadily off the sofa.

Sunday, dusk, was dreary and tepid. The cold snap had broken. A sickly mist dangled near the street outside, and no appreciable breeze blew. Eddies of opaque vapor spun blue fists as evening fell. She opened the window a crack, then a bit more. Soon it was all the way open and she hung her head out, let the night wash her face. She said nothing. No one spoke to her.

