Complex

by Joey Delgado

He sees the dogs through the window, his babies, sleeping on opposite ends of the couch. His girl, lying supine, hind legs spread, grotesquely, almost comically, as far as they can without being flush with the cushion. His boy, Cosmo, face down, the power from his snore rattling his lip, a caricature of a sleeping dog, a cartoon. He keeps the dogs inside when he writes on the patio to prevent distraction. They tend to bark at the slightest provocation; falling leaves, a plastic grocery bag caught in a gust of wind.

His eyes return to the blinking cursor on his blank screen, awaiting inspiration. He clicks out of the writing program to find suitable music to have on in the background; nothing too complex, absolutely no lyrics. He types *music to write to* in Spotify's search text box, hoping for something electronic, but coming up with mostly classical. He puts it on, anyway. He clicks back over to the word processor. A car commercial interrupts the music. *Fucking Christ,* he mutters, clicking back over to Spotify to hit the Skip Ad button. There isn't one. He waits for the thirty seconds to count down. They move slowly. He picks up his phone, uses the bank mobile app to check his finances, see if he can't afford to pay the monthly subscription rate for the premium option that will allow him to listen to music uninterrupted. He can. He goes back to his laptop, realizes the music has resumed, and clicks over to begin writing without making the purchase.

He closes his eyes, listens to the noises of the condominium complex where he and his boyfriend, Timmy, have lived for two years. The first thing he hears, a Honda commercial. *Fuck*, he says, but makes no move to close out its source. Next he hears the falling water from his patio fountain, a plastic number his boyfriend bought a week after moving in. It's styled to look like carved stone, weathered, with a faux algae line that is far beneath the real algae line. The fountain is capped with a copper lotus flower, completely clashing with the English garden aesthetic. The fountain came with

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a cherub topper, but Timmy's Chinese heritage and his own fear of angel babies prevented its use, and thus the lotus flower was purchased from the gardening section at a nearby Home Depot. He focuses his attention on sounds outside the patio. Several dogs are barking, the majority being yaps from small dogs because, like him, none of his neighbors wanted a dog too big for a condo. A couple is fighting in Spanish, which elicits dormant moths in his gut to flutter their wings in embarrassment. The age old if/then statement of close quarter dwellers races through his head. *If I can hear them [fighting, singing in the shower, pooping, fucking], then they can hear me.* He hears a layered, Robert Altmanesque conversation coming from the other side of the gate separating the complex from the main road. It's the same group of meth heads who wait to be buzzed in by what he assumes is their dealer. But he hears them, the frenetic cacophony of words, a symphony of tweak, every Friday night. He doesn't tell his boyfriend there could possibly be a meth dealer in the complex. Timmy doesn't react well to life's gritty realities. *The Wire* put him in a state of what can only be described as full on Victorian melancholia.

He opens his eyes. The cursor on his laptop screen continues to blink. A Chopin etude ends and a Nissan commercial takes over. He looks in the window, sees both dogs looking at him, heads cocked slightly to the right. He stands up, walks to the backdoor, let's them out. He returns to his laptop. A leaf falls and the barking starts.

He begins to write.