The End of My Second Life

by Matthew Robinson

Here you stand in the kitchen, cracking the ice loose from the ice tray, flexing your skinny arms, clenching teeth, feigning strength. I weigh an empty glass in my fingertips. An open bottle of gin swings between us. We are moments away from the end, and it feels like it. I can honestly say that very few things in my life have made as much sense as this realization, this feeling. I had wondered how I would feel, and I wondered how I would feel.

Neither of us has been able to say it, but we catch it in each other's eyes and turn to the contrived equanimity we devised for ourselves and—we hope—those around us who are only going to find out it is over right after we do. And what exactly is over? What did we have? When, upon your presence in the room, did my already rapidly beating heart cease to feel as though it harbored a second, smaller heart?

I illuminate you to our imminent condition and the living room transforms into a solar system. We gravitate around false conceptions of ourselves. When you tell someone that what you have with them is no longer, it's an abstract notion at first, like the existence of life on other planets. Ambient sound conjures from elsewhere, outside, leaking through the walls, thin glass, slightly opened windows. Tonight we will usher in the skyline of a future apart, and emerging from beyond that horizon is pure hurt and loss, to be followed shortly thereafter by a sense of emptiness, conditioned to endure the wait for our unescorted lives to give way to a sense of renewal.

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