

SOME NIGHTS

by Ron Burch

Some nights you really feel it. The weight of it sitting on you as you lounge in an oversized stained purple chair, a parrot on the arm next to you, preening his blue-green feathers, his head bent halfway around as he scratches his own yellow face with a curled left claw, gray and bumpy. Outside, it is quiet, it is warm, a Los Angeles night not of horns and racing engines, and you are alone in this house that is too large for you and a parrot. A house too large that you rented in the hopes of sharing it with another but you are alone. It is just you and the parrot and too many empty rooms not yet filled with enough furniture. You make a few calls to friends to try to pass the time because you can feel it pressing on you and you feel the panic. You worry what it can do to you this night. This night, which seems especially wounded. And you don't know if you can last it. If you have never felt this feeling, then you won't understand. Or maybe you will, maybe, kind of, in a literary sense, but if you haven't felt the panic in your chest, your heart rate speeding up because you are aware and you are conscious that this, this cannot go on: I cannot take another night like this. It is too much and you distract yourself with old girlfriends and online dating sites and you hope that someone will be there for you this one night. It's not about sex, it's not even about friendship, it's about survival, and you think to yourself, fuck, don't get all melodramatic, it's just one night, you can make it pass, you've done it before, you met loneliness, you know it so well by now it could be a pet, it could be a parrot next to you with its sharp claws digging into stained fabric, and if you aren't careful, if you move too quickly and surprise it, for it is a wild thing, it can and it will eventually bite you. So you text a friend who does not text back, and you text your recent ex who will never text back, and you text a woman you kind of know, who might want to know you better, but she says that she's already out and maybe she can do Thursday, you should call her, and you wonder why you aren't out.

Why the fuck are you here in this house feeling it and you know if you go to the nearby tavern on Glendale Blvd., the one with the liter German beers and the brats and spatzel, and you go in through that heavy wooden door with the broad metal handle and you settle yourself alone at the wooden bar on a black swivel chair made in Germany that you are starting something terrible and unspeakable that you cannot handle. So you stay in the house, the house that seems to be collapsing around you, getting smaller every minute, and you contact a stranger on an online dating site. You send a funny message to her and she quickly answers in kind and you know that you have no interest in her and she probably has no interest in you as well as you check out each other's profiles, and summaries and tiny pictures, and questions about how often you masturbate and do you believe if contraceptives are immoral, but you and she banter back and forth for an hour or so and she finally tells you that her name is Sally and you say your name is Rob and you send suggestively sexual lines to each other while exploring a roomful of each other's personal history the size of a mansion, and you desperately want it to keep going on and on even though more than an hour has passed and you two are running out of things to talk about and the amount of time it takes for her to respond grows longer and longer with each succeeding message and you know it will eventually stop, as it has before, and she will grow silent, and perhaps she will answer a message from you tomorrow but most likely not but then it will be tomorrow and it won't seem as bad until the night comes again and hopefully it won't be one of those nights when you feel it.

