

The Duplicate

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For weeks they used every medium to say: This day will be an end or a beginning. This day will bring destruction or enlightenment. From this day when negative splits off from positive every resulting thing will be different.

No matter how many times they said it, I got no closer to understanding. But I was curious. So when that day broke, I was already walking. I wanted to see.

They came from everywhere in black trucks. I do not know who they were. They used something tied to where we live. They shut down a kind of power. They worked very quickly. They would offload a duplicate and disappear into a residence. Soon they'd come back out again with another and throw it into the trucks.

They replaced everyone. I watched it happen. They missed me. I never went home. I've wandered a long time around the edges of this place without being sure I exist. Maybe there is another who continues my life. Or maybe there is a hole where I was. Or maybe they are waiting. I am tired. I don't care anymore.

After the substitution everything was and was not as it had been. It took a while for you to get accustomed to your mapping software. You were all hesitant and stayed close to each other while habit filled in the datasets and the machinery stopped drawing attention to itself.

I would hear you talk about the others. You referred to them as simple machines given to narrow tunnels of information and

daydreaming. You said you found something admirable in their ability to get lost.

You saw the substitution as the last thing you would do together. You knew that as the datasets filled up the world would be redefined and you would dissolve into it. This made you unsettled and a little sad. But soon you had forgotten.

She shakes her head as she stands up.

You have forgotten everything.

She is walking away.

