

Window

by T. M. Upchurch

[Challenge: can you write a 250-word story without using the letter "e"?] This story contains one, for fun.

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It's Thursday night and today, work was tiring. Driving was tiring. Now is tiring.

Ruth's body hurts from wiping floors, commanding kids, stacking chairs and trying not to think of *that man* (who only wants a trophy woman, or a car, or a TV show, or anything but Ruth). Hurts from hiding in a bathroom again; crying, picturing hands on hands, mouth on mouth, stomach against stomach... company, warmth, touch, talk... but no.

Night will bring a glass of malt whisky, itchy Dorito crumbs, and cold pillows. 2am holds four options: work and mail (an inbox bulging with notifications); food and drink (soup, salad, whisky, junk); Instagram and Spotify (photos, words, music to cry to), or... nothing. A void; a Mobius strip of thoughts on what is not.

Ruth sits watching hour on hour drain away, moonlit clock hands clicking till dawn paints a dull horizon; crimson sun and albino moon both mocking: *who can't find company in this swarming, clamouring world? How ludicrous, to want for talk.*

Tortuous thoughts of Thursday, Friday, Saturday... March, April, May...

No man. Or woman. To talk to. To touch. To hold.

It's autumn. Ruth's skin is wrinkling. Ruth's hair sprouting gray. Ruth's back is curving forwards, folding, softly caving into tomorrow. Ruth sips and swallows. Thinks, film or book? Cushion or pillow? Pills or alcohol? Window or cliff? It's probably not important.

'OK,' says Ruth. 'It's just Thursday. Thursday's always a bad day. It'll all turn out OK tomorrow. Friday's good.'

Probably.

Maybe.

