The Cold

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The Cold

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"He wonders why I'm sitting here by myself. Like I have a point to prove, he told me. I told him no, no point, nothing to prove. Sometimes it's just better to be alone when you choose to be alone. He's got the baby today. Back in the bedroom of my parents' house that is our make-shift apartment. He hates it there. I don't blame him. I suspect he's beginning to hate me."

Cover Page Footnote

This prose is available in The Angle: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1992/iss1/26
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The wind is really cold today. The sun was deceiving, and the cotton sweater I’m wearing offers no protection. The lake seems as angry as me, and it keeps crashing, going back, crashing, going back, like it never learns its lesson. I can feel the coldness of the rock I’m sitting on through my jeans. My hands are bright pink, and I keep them tucked behind my knees, trying to bring some relief.

We used to come down here all the time. I remember the picnic he made for us. It was the beginning of it all, and the August night was so warm. I remember that I was wearing a black tank top, and jeans I thought I looked nice in. I should’ve worn shorts, and little trickles of sweat huddled at the corners of my nose and crept under my hair. He brought a bottle of white wine, but he forgot the glasses and he forgot the corkscrew. So we just shoved the cork down and swigged the wine right out of the bottle. And when we made that toast, we didn’t have to say “to us,” because we knew that’s what we meant.

And then he held the bottle for me to drink from too high, and streams of sticky wine ran around the corners of my mouth, and I wiped the drips off of my chin with the back of my hand.

Once, he told me he’d never really been friends with a girl before. He’d had lots of girlfriends, but they were never really friends. He told me I was the “neatest person” he’d ever met.

I take my hands out and look at them. It hurts to bend my fingers. I like his hands. Short, thick fingers. It used to make me feel so good to hold his hand. Not really a feeling like safety, but more like connection, because I knew he liked it too.

When I had Elizabeth, we couldn’t think of a first name for her. It just seemed so important—we could give someone a name that they’d carry around with them for a lifetime. All we could come up with was a middle name. It’s been six months, and she’s still Elizabeth.

Yesterday, he told me he was going out with his friends. I was busy with Elizabeth, and an hour later, I looked out the bathroom window, and there he was, sitting on the trunk of that rusting Oldsmobile smoking a cigarette. He couldn’t bring himself to leave, but he couldn’t bring himself to stay.

I wanted to rush out and grab him close to me like I used to when he was troubled and tell him that I was still in love with him, if only he could still love me. Instead, I just curled myself up on that cold tile floor and cried.

We used to go to Younger’s and request the booth farthest away from everything so we could just talk and never be interrupted. We’d talk about all the places we were going to go together, all of the things we were going to learn together. But we never talked about how long we were going to be together.

Once, on our way home from Boston, we got off the Mass. Turn Pike for dinner, and a guy in the parking lot joked, “What, you came all the way from New York to eat at Friendly’s?” When we were walking to the restaurant, he grabbed me close, and said, “Did you ever realize how nice people are to us when we’re together? We must be radiating something!”

I don’t care about the cold anymore. I hope it’ll freeze me, freeze my feelings. Make me numb to it all.