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Returns

Shock. Shock. Disbelief turns to anger as the clock
Runs out. Any talk
Evaporates in the acrid air
Of tear-gas fumes. Trash cans smash through storefronts in
the glare
Of burning cop cars.
The party's over, folks. The corner bars
Go silent. The big TV in the living room
In the eerie a.m.
Sits stunned, alone, as states bleed red and more red.
Where's a tourniquet? Feeling's dead.
On the news, a woman says it's like giving birth
To a baby you know will be stillborn. Our loss isn't worth
The tears to cry.
When something happens that was never supposed to, why
Is almost an insult.
No one cares. No one cares. Every sane adult
Stares at the kitchen wall
In the morning, hung over, wishing it all
Was a bad dream. Now eat your pancake.
For hours, everyone's been wide awake, too awake.

Kremlin Watch

Now is the time for elevators.

Now is the time for elevator watchers.

We all depend

On who it is (and whom they're with) as they descend

From black-windowed SUVs, then sidle through the

 revolving door

To relax in the marble foyer

As 58 descends to One. What the boss upstairs

Is thinking, no one knows, his immaculate hairs

In the shape of prayerful, folded hands

Across his head. Die-hard fans

Lean over concrete barriers lining Madison Ave.

They'd like to have

What he is having, all of it: the French-style mirrors,

The chandeliers in 24K, the ex-supermodel wife—without the terrors

Of being last or less.

Whoever goes up the elevator express

Must loiter there a decent amount

Before they whoosh back down. Whom to anoint,

Whom to exile, whom

To *quid pro quo* is the talk of the room

At the top. While TV crews at the bottom resume

Their Kremlin watch of doom and gloom.

Reality Check

So what is false? How much is true?
At the bottom of the TV screen, a scrolling chyron
Checks for you. Everyone must try on
Some new 3D glasses: the sky's not really blue.
Black is white, in some instances.
Torturers know the first step to extract
Any remaining resistance
Is to get their subject to contradict a fact.
Then it's all downhill.
How far have we slipped to date?
Outside, the ground is sheathed in white. Which one of us will
Vouch that it's really snow? Is it too late
Before it all turns to mush?
Sometimes just the day-to-day becomes too much,
Never mind the nutcase with an AK-47
Who believes heaven
Guides him to the back room of a pizza place
To infiltrate a child-sex ring. Has everything been orchestrated
to erase
CNN's fingerprints?
How can anyone know what they know if In is
Out and Up is Down? Send in
The clowns, don't bother they're here. *Fin.*

This Just In

All the news today is bad.

Ankara, Turkey: an off-duty cop assassinates

The Russian ambassador in an art gallery. Berlin: a loner who hates

The West, a self-radicalized nomad,

Rams a truck into a crowded holiday market,

Killing 12. What can anyone do to make it

Stop? Meanwhile an arctic freeze

Seizes half the country, downing trees

And power lines, stranding hundreds. Sad,

Tweets you-know-who. All the news today is bad.

A friend, stage 4, who fought and won an all-clear

Gets word: it's back, and worse. We all fear

What's coming next. A final apocalypse?

A burst Dow bubble? A Beijing-like, permanent solar eclipse

That churns the air to ash?

At least it'd be a White Christmas. Is it time to cash

Our chips in, drop out, go high?

Tell the LED screens a long goodbye?

No more news is good news. Someone wrote it

On a subway wall, on a Post-It:

Something something the sounds of silence.

Deep in the woods, on an icy pond, the *ka-chunk*

Of a hockey puck, *clunk*,

From stick to stick the only thing that still makes sense.

Finals

The last class arrives,
Slumped behind their chair-slash-desks.
“Professor, Professor, what’s next?”
The party’s over. Time to go back to our lives
And go our separate way.
Time to think good thoughts that all is ok
In the US of A. *That* could never
Happen here. No Putin-plutocrat could ever overpower
All three Federal branches
In a year or less. We have balances,
We have checks. We’re not Russia. We’re
Not Italy. We’re no pushover.
Wow, it’s dark out already,
Only 4:30. Along the Charles, a steady
String of headlights is heading home.
But whose home? The one I dutifully phone
Every other week
To talk to Mom, still holding on—we speak
The same flat vowels, the same “uh-huhs.” Or the one
I’ve laid a claim to, here, the one I run
Away from, then toward
Repeatedly, as if looking for the perfect word.

Tally

All that's solid melts into air,
Says Marx, Karl not Groucho. Everywhere
A brand of fear
Stamps itself on faces: on the bus, in a rear-view mirror,
Poring over a café menu
Or into the ice cubes of a vodka tonic. When you
Consider all that's happened since,
Anxiousness makes sense. Time to wince
As billionaires punch the Up button
That takes them to the Tower's top floor. What's been done
Can be undone, the arc of history
Can be bent backwards until it hurts, until this story
Ends unhappily: no hugs, no lessons.
Only open lesions
As the country tears itself apart.
The final tally's done. All those in favor of an open heart
Say Nay; the Ayes
Have it. Say Yes to a world where big lies
Become our daily bread.
Say Yes to letting the living dead
Rise again to walk among us; we're their feast.
We're their host, their yeast.

And Never Brought to Mind

What are you looking for? pops up
On the computer screen. An excellent question.
Anything from a TV rerun
To a lost pen to wondering what's up
With the next quarter century
Or so. What am I looking for.
My first response, honestly,
Is I had no idea there was anything more
Than what's in front of me. As though
A heavy rain
Veils the highway, and the car's headlights only go
So far. Must we pass this way (again)?
Or what if the pre-recorded backing track
Cuts out
Suddenly, live on stage, leaving you to sing-shout
To absolutely nothing. It's wack.
Everything you think you know dissolves.
The image you've always had of yourself resolves
To a fuzzy web shot
You no longer recognize. Is this a plot
To drive you crazy? What if
All there is is a riff

On what's missing? Should old acquaintance
Be forgot? Quick, take a glance
At who's still dancing on the barroom floor.
Anyone left to fuck or fight?
Then say good night.
Amnesia, pal, is what we came here for.

The Morning After

Five in the morning, I'm out for the count.
It feels like a year
Since last night. I hear some random guy shout,
"This is my city!" down on the street. A strange fear
Has taken hold: when will I feel
This much grace, a real
Sense of being together? Earlier, every train
Was waiting at the station, in a light rain,
Like in a movie. (A girl wails
Into her phone: "There are so many walls—
How do I get out of here?")
A good question. I felt for her.
At the bar, everyone would raise a drink
To regret and shame. No time to think
Of what comes next. Kick a path through piles of confetti
And keep going. It was getting
Hard to breathe in a blur of masks and noise—
Lots of paisley, glittery blazers, onesies
Of bunnies, shirtless bartenders and happy zombies—
Where boys are girls, and girls boys.
Look, every year is a mix
Of ugly and pretty, you have to do some mental tricks

To make it work. Take a pill
For godsake. Pretend it's all fine. I'll
Grab a couple glasses of Prosecco
With friends. There'll be sweaters, snacks,
A comfy couch. Everyone will nod and smile, let go of ego
For once. It's been a rough year, relax.

Same Old

Another year. Another *horribilis annus*.

If our past is also our future, fuck us.

In no one can we trust.

So what is going to happen to us? The dust

Has barely settled; the Court's ninth chair's

Already draped in black. Where's

A purple flare to shoot off for Prince, and watch erupt

In sparkly rain? There've been far too many abrupt

Endings: in nightclubs, in cafeterias,

On street corners. Too many vigils verging on hysterias

Of sobbing, propped up

Before the TV cameras. Too much blood to sop up.

Remember Kenya's burning barricades of tires

To block voters? Remember the fires

Set by migrants in their squalid, makeshift camp

To protest? In North Dakota, the U.S. flag's a stamp

Against a barren sky. It's war.

Teenager brawls in malls. Fistfights in midflight. Stay tuned for more.