

Worst Day Ever

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It didn't quite make sense to me when they said that the nightmare that ruined everything, split time in half, put different pieces of me in different places, was gonna be over. I wasn't sure what it meant. Where did everyone go? I was in Michigan at the time and somehow everyone and everything was still there. Lying on my back looking at the ceiling of my parents' attic, the reality of 14 months a weighted blanket on the sky. How did I let us come apart so bad during yet another time when we were supposed to be together? Where did everyone go?

A couple months into it I learned to lean my head back on the subway and imagine the smell of coffee as the machine clicked on. Looking out the window I would notice six inches of snow coating Lafayette Park, smokestacks in the distance while everything else stood still. Everyone but me is smart enough not to move. I awake and leave you and the dog asleep to lumber to the kitchen and pour myself a cup, then I settle into one of those terrible plastic chairs to read the news. Jorge Ben Forca Bruta plays in my headphones, it sounds ok for now but I'll like it better when you wake and I can fill the kitchen with it from the speakers. After a while I hear the dog's nails clicking through the hall and you emerge with a kiss. Perfect day. Somewhere in there you head to work and I keep reading until 10am rolls around, 34 degrees with the sun now beaming across the courtyard. I clip the dog into all her stuff and let her sniff around Lafayette Central before we trek past the elementary school into the big park.

Lafayette Park was designed by Mies van der Rohe, Hiberseimer, and Caldwell. The guiding concept was to mimic natural landscapes. It was designed to be a healthy place for people and animals. It is a famous place and I'm still proud to have lived there. My grandparents were there in Chateaufort for a couple decades, for years and years I dreamed of making it back. Their old condo is on the right as we walk past City Place, where my dad's dad lived at a different time. Sometimes I see my former professor in the park. A friend lives in the Parc Lafayette condos, she is from Russia and tells me about nobody having food or electricity in the 90s. One time I told her everything in the world belongs to starving people. Past St Joseph's and over the Dequindre Cut.

Before the Dequindre Cut was there it was railroad tracks with some tent communities. Don't get me wrong I love the Dequindre Cut, as does everyone, but my grandma was right to be concerned about the displacement of the community members. We used to walk up to the Burger King or the gas station on Gratiot on holidays, sometimes we would go to Lafayette Foods too. Me and the dog walk down the ramp to the Dequindre Cut, I let her stop to sniff the ground as much as she wants. Up the ramp and across Lafayette and back home, time for her breakfast. I heat up some leftovers and head into the office to write my dissertation. Osibisa, when you were baby, your mama told you not to play with fiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiire!!! My dissertation is about the relationship between speech and power. Before I had an apartment to write a dissertation in, I used to write in the Purdy-Kresge library on campus.

One time I was in Purdy-Kresge and one of the guys from work saw me and asked if I would come pray with the brothers from the MSA. I declined this invitation, not because I didn't want to pray but because I was overwhelmed by the warmth of the gesture and not ready to accept universal love. This might sound familiar to you. I honored the request years later at a big protest that was on tv and joined salah, my mom has a picture. I loved the feeling of being outside time and space and I loved being so welcomed. I used to get a Qu'ran with English translations every year on my birthday from the guys at work. The grief is unimaginable. Families torn apart, whole lines of ancestry lost under the rubble. Who could murder a world? I marched every day until I couldn't think or remember words. I understood why the airman did what he did. He didn't wanna live in a world where he couldn't stop it. Strange men take pictures of the students and I tell the students to stand behind me. I look at the strange men's faces. I get home and crumple into nothing on the couch screaming into my sleeve. I cry every day in my office. When we got married the sky was orange and everyone who needed to be there was there, our fathers signed the form together, and time stopped when you smiled at me during the ceremony. I did not feel that way again until I joined the prayer.

After some more dissertation I take the dog out again, this time to the nation's top riverfront. I love downtown, you can see Canada. That is a line from Payroll. I like to joke that I picked the restaurant we went to when I proposed because it is on the same block as a Payroll video. The dog has a nap and I work out and look out at the snow as the sun goes down, then I watch a movie. I like to zone out and watch Tsai Ming-Liang. When you get home it is time for dinner and we watch tv while you do your notes, maybe I play Counter Strike with my brother for a few hours. That is an almost perfect day. A perfect day is when you don't have work or notes and we go to Belle Isle with the dog and put her on the long leash at Sunset Point. She runs in circles and then she is sleepy so we drive to Vinsetta Garage for dinner. Maybe afterwards you play Stardew Valley while I watch boxing and yell at the tv.

The worst day ever is in New York over and over for a year. I start to turn into something else so that nobody else has to. I used to teach Composition classes in the morning at UM-Dearborn and then English classes in the afternoon at Wayne. In between I would go to New Yasmeen Bakery on W. Warren and the nice lady would remember my name and that I needed a fork. I would eat the shawarma platter in the car and listen to Joe Budden. At Wayne that day Khalil comes to speak to my students about mass incarceration and Tiktok activism. The United States has banned Tiktok so that Khalil and other Palestinians can't tell America's youth about what is happening in Palestine. I hate every day in New York because people are afraid to say out loud that Palestine and Palestinians exist. In Detroit I saw a Palestinian flag every day. The grief is unimaginable. Part of why we voted for Obama in 2008 was that he was (supposedly) the most pro Palestine candidate in history, Palestinian kids I was in college with even said so. I will never vote for Democrats ever again. I was right about Bernie Sanders the whole time. The guys at work said that once he saw how much Arabs supported him he would change his mind about Palestine so I shouldn't worry about his previous voting record. He is such a piece of shit for what he did to them. He let you down too, big time. I could have been a bit more sensitive about that. About most shit really. Had I been sensitive about anything though I am scared that I never would have come back.

Democrats lost the election. Of course they lost Michigan. They lost me too, I voted in Hind Rajab. All they had left at the end, having lost the moral high ground, is the self interest of a couple key voter groups (34 year old university professors for one) and a more gradual erosion of the remaining checks on billionaire power. Not enough people were sold on that. Who knows what happens now. I felt a little better today. They are saying they will rebuild over and over. They will never be defeated. God is the greatest.

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