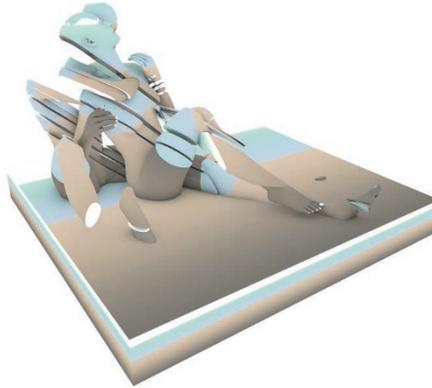


# BREATHE THE LAST BITS OF AIR

## Endgame.

BY EMILY MCCOSH

Are there stars outside?  
*Are you actually asking me that? Say it again.*  
 Ask me again, if you're serious.  
 I can ask again, I'm not afraid. Are there stars outside any more?  
*You should be afraid. And there may be.*  
 Well, go look.  
*How do you think I should go about doing that?*  
 Look out of the window, genius.  
*There are no windows ... there is no glass.*  
 There must be windows. How do you look outside without windows?  
*There're no windows. And there's no looking outside. Anyhow, if there were windows to look out of, there'd be nothing to look outside at.*  
 What kind of statement is that? I told you, look at the stars.  
*There are no stars. They've all winked out of existence. One. By. One...*  
 Utter rot.  
*Don't mock me.*  
 If there was anything left in the Universe worth mocking, it would be you.  
*One more insult, and I swear, I'll leave you all alone.*  
 You won't. You have nowhere to leave to. No path to walk upon. We're stitched together. Anyhow, how do you know the stars have gone out when there are no windows to look out of?  
*I've opened the door.*  
 Then open the door and look at the stars.  
*I'd rather not.*  
 I said go look at the stars! You never do as I ask. I can't even look for myself. My eyes are gone. They're whiter than milk —  
*There's no more milk.*  
 — they're larger than galaxies —  
*There are no more galaxies. No more stars. I told you that.*  
 — they're brighter than stars. They must be. Have you ever tried looking at my eyes while I'm sleeping? I think you must have. They must be brighter than stars.  
 (She reaches out, lets her fingers hover over his eyes, but pulls her hand back.)  
*I've never looked at your eyes. Promise.*  
 Never?  
*Never. I've told you that. Listen. You're stubborn and you never listen to me. Why don't I leave you when you never listen to me?*  
 Well, maybe you love me?  
*Maybe? What kind of word is 'maybe'? I either love you or I don't.*  
 Well?  
*Well what?*  
 Do you?



*Do I what?*  
 Love me?  
*Probably not.*  
 (There is silence like the end of the world.)  
 Are you there?  
*I'm here.*  
 What were you saying?  
*I was saying I probably don't love you. I might have at one point but I probably don't now. I wish I did, but I don't think there is such a thing as love any more. It caught the last train out of here. When all the people ran away to the dying stars, it went right along with them. It's gone. It has died. Just like the Sun died.*  
 The Sun can't die. It's the Sun.  
*It's grey.*  
 Grey?  
*Grey. Less than black. More than white. Grey as slate.*  
 Is that what love is like now?  
*I think so. I can't be sure. I can't feel my heart.*  
 Can I feel it?  
 (He reaches out, lets his hand hover over her chest. It doesn't come close enough to touch.)  
*I'd rather you didn't.*  
 (Withdraws his hand.)  
 I'd rather I did.  
*It doesn't matter. It's my heart. Even if I can't feel it.*  
 I could, you know? If I wanted to. If I really wanted to, you'd let me.  
*You couldn't. You can't even see me.*  
 Can you see me?  
*Not hardly.*  
 Well, I think you're right.  
*About what?*  
 About love like the dead Sun.  
*I probably am. It's a shameful thing to be right about.*  
 Is it?  
 (He thinks, and laughs.)  
 Maybe it's better to be right about it than to be wrong and think with all your heart that

you're right. If you could feel your heart, that is ... Are there stars outside?  
*There may be.*  
 Let's go see.  
*There's nothing left outside ... Anyhow, you can't walk.*  
 I know. You can carry me. Take me to the window. Let's go outside. We can use the door. You can carry me.  
*I can't.*  
 I know you can. You shouldn't lie.  
*Don't call me a liar. I'll leave you.*  
 You should leave me.  
*I should.*  
 Let's go outside.  
 (They go outside, both of them.)  
 Describe it to me.  
*Well, it's nothingness.*  
 Is that it?  
*It is. There's no description for nothingness. It's like sleeping, the world is sleeping ... Let me set you down.*  
 Yes ... Yes, do. Don't leave me though.  
*I won't.*  
 I know ... You can look at my eyes, if you'd like.  
*Will I like it?*  
 I don't know.  
 (She crawls into his lap, opens his eyes and lifts his face.)  
*Well, what do you know? They are brighter than stars.*  
 Are they?  
*Yes, more beautiful too. But just as sad.*  
 Ah.  
 (Kisses his lips, gently.)  
*I suppose ... you can feel my heart now ... if you'd like.*  
 I would ...  
*Then why hesitate?*  
 I don't know ...  
 (He wraps his arms around her waist, lays his cheek against her breast.)  
 Well, it's unsteady.  
*Yes, well, that has to do with you, not the world splintering to bits.*  
 Oh.  
 (Sighs)  
 Now?  
 Now, what?  
*Now what do we do?*  
 Now? Breathe the last bits of air, I suppose.  
 (Sighs)  
 Breathe. ■

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