The Clock on the Wall

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The Clock on the Wall
Charlotte Evensen

She sits staring at the clock on the wall. It is half past one. She had been here for exactly forty-five minutes. Forty-five slow minutes during which she had filled out every form recounting her birthdate, her weight, her eye color—the medical history of herself and her family. That had been the toughest part of the day, filling out the information for her family. She did not even know her mother’s birth date for goodness’ sake. Worse things could happen, she supposed. She looked around here. The people working here had tried to make this place more cheery, she observed. The wall was a calming yellow, the kind children use to describe the color of sun. She supposed the blue flowery border added a sort of enchantment. A feeling that what she was about to do was natural. She moved her eyes from the borders to the square-shaped table in the middle of the room. All sorts of magazines piled around it. A lot having to do with the health of women, some having to do with beauty, and a few nothing in particular. Just general entertainment of movie star life and other sorts of useless things. She wondered how much it cost the office to keep up all of these subscriptions. It was probably a drop in the bucket considering the cost of furnishing the place she was about to be in. She wondered how long it would take the medicine to work. How long would it take for her to fall asleep and stop wondering about this child she was not going to have. She woke up uncertain about where she was. There was something shadowy in front of her eyes. She could not quite make out what it was, a silhouette of some kind. She stood up as the nurse walked through the door to call for the next patient.

"Ms. James, do you mind if I call you Sarah? No? Okay. Well, Sarah, we need you to put on this robe. Isn’t this a beautiful color? I always hate those white robes, they are so sterile. Oh and by the way, I need you to take these pills. Here is a glass of water. You can just put it by the bedside when you are finished."

She wondered how long it would take the medicine to work. How long would it take for her to fall asleep and stop wondering about this child she was not going to have…

She woke up uncertain about where she was. There was something shadowy in front of her eyes. She could not quite make out what it was, a silhouette of some kind.

"Ms. James, Sarah? Are you awake? Can you hear me?"

She wondered if she should say something. It seemed easier somehow to keep her eyes closed and stay in this warm haze she found herself in. At least for a few minutes, it was important to hang onto this unreality before it faded away.

"Yes, I am awake. I am just having a little trouble opening my eyes," she answered quietly.

"That is okay. It should go away in a few minutes. Is there anyone on file that I should call to pick you up?"

The woman’s incessant questions were beginning to annoy her. Why couldn’t she just leave her alone so she could pull her thoughts together?

"I will take a taxi, thank you."
Her tears became scalding lines condemning her every thought, her every action. She could not stop them. Neither could she stop the constriction of her chest with every breath she took. She wondered how that being inside her had felt. Had it felt this torn apart? Was there a recognition on its part about what had been going on while she had been in blissful sleep?

"Ms. James, your taxi is here." A voice accompanied the brusque knocking on the door. She wiped her eyes attempting to ebb the tears. She opened the door, mumbled a hurried thanks as she passed the receptionist and headed outside the automatic doors and into the taxi.

"Is there any place in particular that you would like to go, young lady?" a gruff voice asked.

She wondered if he knew what she had done. She wondered what he would say if she told him never to stop driving. What would happen if she begged him to keep moving forward and never go back in any direction?

"1236 Winding Lane, and please take Interstate to get there." She knew he wondered at that comment, usually passengers tried to save money by requesting the shortest way possible.

"Yes, ma'am." She looked at the roads rushing by. She wondered at how life worked itself out in nature. She wondered how nature could allow herself to be perverted by all these unnatural things—unnatural buildings made of cold cement, unnatural roads, made specifically to contain nature into a controllable environment. She wondered about the people living along these roads. Did they feel themselves affected by how they lived? Eventually she realized she wasn't crying anymore. If she concentrated enough on the external world, the reality of the act was no longer relevant.

"That is 25 dollars, ma'am." "Thank you," she answered. "Thank you very much for the ride." She turned and walked into her building, rode the elevator and entered her apartment. It was much as she left it. Next, simple, unembarrassed. It was necessary that life remain that way.

She remembered her appointment at six o'clock. It seemed so far away. She looked up at the clock on the wall. It was time to leave.

Birth Ritual

Michael Schultz

Light at the end of the tunnel,
Pushed through a fleshy funnel.
Into the warm arms,
Waiting charms,
Of an alien world.

Light fills this place unknown
End product of a seed once sown,
Helpless outside,
And he cried
In this alien world.

Many warm and caring hands,
Attend to all of his demands
Helpless and blind,
But it's kind
This new alien world.

The residue of passing stays
In this new child for days.
Given in birth,
To this Earth,
To this alien world.

Eyes start unfolding to the sun,
A brand-new life has just begun.
Looks through his cries,
To realize,
It's his alien world.