

***You and I and the End of the World***

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SETTING: London, 1941; the Blitz. An abandoned bunker. There is an overturned stool and everything is covered in dust.

AT RISE: A woman stumbles into the space, dirty, wearing men's clothes that are far too big; wrapped across her shoulders is a sweater and tied around her wrist is a lacy scarf. She sees the space around her and begins to frantically scrub the stool and the walls. Thunder booms before she speaks.

It's the end of the world.

It may not actually be, I don't really know.

I think it's just a thunderstorm.  
A bad one, but just a storm nonetheless.  
We've come back from worse.

Then again, you can never really tell with the weather.

But today...yeah, maybe today...

(Pause.)

I'd like to be inside a cumulonimbus cloud.

Did I ever tell you that?  
I don't think I did...

I'd like to see all the electrons whizzing about.  
I'd catch one and swallow it and let it light me up, turn me blue, make my veins glow.

I know in reality it'd probably kill me.

But in my mind -  
in my fantasy it makes me powerful;  
I'd have the power of lightning coursing through my whole body.

I'd fly across the sky with a tail of electricity trailing behind me like my own personal lightning bolt,  
And I'd be unstoppable.  
Indestructible.  
Fearless.  
And I could find everyone I've lost.  
I could pull them out of the cracks and -

(She sees something we don't.)

What was I saying?

Oh, today.  
Today I'm just waiting.

See, I have this theory -  
bare with me -  
I have this theory that if you tell yourself the same lie over and over again that eventually you, yourself -  
the creator of the lie -  
you believe it.

Ok, so it's not *my* theory,  
But it's something that I wholeheartedly believe.

Today my lie is:  
Everything is going to be alright.

I have yet to believe this.  
I'm still trying really hard.

(A boom of thunder.)

Not long.

(She stares up at the ceiling.)

If they are right about today -  
Anyway.

(Deep breath. Thunder.)

We hiked a mountain during a thunderstorm once.  
Do you remember that?  
We could see the top and then the thunder started.  
And you said we should turn back,  
But we kept going.  
Every step you said,  
“We should turn back.”  
And I said,  
“We should.”  
But we kept climbing.  
And then we stood on top of the mountain as the clouds swirled around us.  
And then the sky opened up.  
And then we ran as fast as we could.  
But it wasn't that fast,  
Because the rocks were already so wet.  
And it took us so long to get down the mountain,  
But we were smiling for the rest of the day.  
The thunder kept booming,  
And we kept smiling.

(Beat.)

See, I have to tell myself it's thunder.  
This.  
This noise.  
Because if I don't -

(She starts to tear up.)

Sorry, no, sorry -  
What was I - ?  
There's got to be a way to avoid this part -

No.  
Not now.

(She hums to calm herself.)

Remember this?

God, I almost forgot...

(She starts to sing - it is disjointed, panicked.)

*When the wind starts blowing  
When the sky's full of sound  
When the boys, they go runnin'  
She'll never look down*

*When the sea starts churning  
When the fires do burn  
When the mountains tremble  
We'll stand tall and firm  
We'll stand tall and firm*

*Oh, the lands they bear no more life  
And the days fill up with our strife  
But we'll keep on carrying on  
Till the stars cease to shine  
Till the stars cease to shine*

Do remember that day you just came into the room with a guitar and said,  
"Wanna sing with me?"  
And we just sat there and sang for hours,  
And somehow your fingers didn't even hurt from playing for so long -  
Must have been the calluses -  
But you kept playing and we kept singing.  
That was such a wonderful day.

Maybe that was the last day...  
The last good day.

(She gets lost in the song.)

*When the leaves fall in winter  
When the warmth fades away*

*When the dark clouds gather  
When the days have gone gray*

*Whenever I'm lonely  
And the path seems so dark  
She'll still stand beside me  
She'll keep up the spark  
She'll keep up the spark*

*Oh, the lands they bear no more life  
And the days fill up with our strife  
But we'll keep on carrying on  
Till the stars cease to shine  
Till the stars cease to shine*

(The dust of the song settles. She looks up and sees flowers stuck in a crack and takes one out, staring at it for a long time.)

I remember our wedding day.

(She takes her scarf and wraps it around her head like a veil. She is reliving her memory.)

Mum!  
Mum, stop -  
I, no get off, I've got it!

(She settles herself and looks out as if she is looking in a mirror.)

Oh god.  
Is that me?

No, no stop -  
don't mess with it!

(She looks at herself for a long moment.)

Oh...

(She then sees the destruction around her and tries to get back, shutting her eyes and concentrating, but she can't. Slowly, carefully she takes off the veil, wrapping her hands in it, smelling it, trying to salvage what's left.)

Memories are all I have now.  
I have to keep remembering or I'll forget everything.

That was redundant.

I guess it's because everything is gone.  
I have nothing left.  
Just the memories.

(She cries out, as if someone far away might hear.)

DO YOU HEAR ME!?  
I HAVE NOTHING LEFT!!  
NOTHING!!

I don't care if I'm redundant.

(Beat. She looks up.)

I remember when the men came.

(She creates her space.)

I was making bread.  
And I remember thinking,  
"This is so strange, I never make bread."  
And you said out loud,  
"It's so strange, you never make bread."  
And I laughed because it's like you could read my mind.  
And I said,  
"I hope this comes out ok, I have no idea what I'm doing."  
And you said,  
"I can't wait to try it."  
And I smiled at you.

And then there was a knock.

(A deafening knock that turns into thunder. She is nearly knocked over. We're back in the present.)

I lost my train of...

It's getting harder and harder to remember.

It's getting harder and harder -

Oh.

That's right...

(The knock once again. Less deafening. We are back in the memory.)

Why are you here?

They told me to be quiet, they needed *you*.

And you came out and they said,

SIR

Like you were a member of Parliament they said,

SIR

And I stood there thinking,

"Nobody ever calls him SIR."

And you were thinking it, too, I could tell.

But you were too nervous to speak.

And then they handed you a piece of paper,

And they left.

And the door slammed.

(Thunder.)

I remember that because we both jumped.

And then you read the letter.

And you went pale.

Which took a lot because you were so tan then from your time in the garden.



And I knew what it was, but I had to see it.  
But you had already crumpled it up and threw it across the room.  
But I grabbed it anyway and uncrumpled it and it said...

Well, it said you had to go.

We knew there was a war on, but we didn't know it had come to this.  
It was always so distant.  
So far off.  
Not the kind of thing that could ever affect us.

So then I began scrubbing the counter.  
I always scrub the counter when I'm upset.  
And you know that  
...you knew that.

Then you came over.  
And you hugged me from behind.  
And you pressed your forehead into my temple.  
And you said,  
"It's nothing."  
And I said.  
"How can you say that?"  
And you said.  
"Because I wasn't meant to die a hero."  
And I started to cry.  
I was trying so hard not to...

And you said,  
"People who try to be heroes die.  
I'm not a hero.  
I'm not going to die."  
And I cried harder.  
Because you were so wrong;  
You were so, so wrong.  
I knew it even then.

And then we stood there for a long time.  
And we never ate the bread.

We just stood there for what seemed like a whole day.

And then there was one more day.  
That was the day we sang.

And then you were gone.

(Beat.)

To get through the days I imagined you fighting.

(She puts on the sweater. Suddenly she ducks down as if avoiding a bullet.)

I could see it in my head,  
Almost like a memory.

(Thunder mixed with gunfire. She is in the war.)

You said you wouldn't be a hero,  
But I knew better.

You would fight with your brothers.  
You would stand by them.  
Even if you were hurt.

(She falls as if she's hit.)

You'd stand together.  
You'd fight together.

(She is shot. She goes down.)

You'd sing your funeral dirges together.

*Sun comes up.*

*Boys go down.*

*Hup, two, three, four.*

(She falls down "dead". She slowly rises as she speaks.)

And from the ashes  
Your body rises  
Your body rises like smoke  
Sending signals in the sky  
Sending the message of  
Killed - In - Action  
To the Crisp - Uniformed - Men  
Who never saw a day of fighting  
But they know!  
Oh, they know -  
*That this boy is tried and true!*  
*Blue! White! Red!*  
Red, red...  
Blood on his hands, he killed, he killed -  
*He killed the enemy for Queen and Country!*  
*And he shall take his reward!*  
*The name of Hero!*

(She takes off the sweater.)

A name you didn't think you'd get.

And I?  
These Crisp - Uniformed - Men  
Tell me I should be proud.  
I should be so, very proud -  
To be a fucking widow.

(She folds the sweater neatly and places it down center. She pulls out a letter.)

I kept this.  
I always have it on me.

It's not their letter.  
Their letter began,  
"We regret to inform you..."  
No.  
I didn't want to keep that.

This is yours.  
It's the only thing that I could save.

And they didn't get it.

"My love,"  
It starts.

(She reads the rest to herself.)

No.  
This one is just for me.  
The universe doesn't get to keep this.  
This one is all mine.

(Thunder.)

We weren't perfect.  
I know we weren't.  
And that's all right.  
But now, in this moment,  
That's not what I want to remember.  
I want to go out with a bang.

(Thunder. It's closer. It's less like thunder now.)

I want to remember the first time we met.

(Music begins.)

I saw you first.  
And a moment after,  
You saw me.

And we met in slow motion.  
And we didn't even ask each other;  
We just danced.

(She looks out as if she is seeing someone after not seeing them in a long time. She waltzes with them for a few beautiful moments. Thunder. So much closer.)

It's the end of the world.  
I know it is.

But it can't possibly be.  
Right?  
It can't possibly be.  
Because my world ended  
Long before today.

So I'm not afraid.  
I never have to be afraid ever again.  
You gave me that.

(She puts on the sweater. She re-wraps her wrist. She blows a kiss to the heavens.)

So, here's to us.

Here's to you and I...  
And the end of the world.

(Crashing booms come in over the music. She laughs, looking to the ceiling.  
Blackout. There is one last, catastrophic boom.)