

## *Standard Sunday Schedule (Morning Loop)*

Michael Pazen

My eyelids shift aside so I can greet the light, softened by the fog outside. I stretch and groan in my safe haven, bargain for more time, cast my consciousness into a screen to cease slipping back into slumber, and send a picture in response to the one waiting for me. My little device brings me connection and isolation in equal measure. Today, it brings me enough of an excuse and a disruption to launch my legs through the depth, away from the warmth, towards the cool carpet, into a larger world, and onto responsibility and expectation.

Release rolls over into relaxation; cold, clean water erupts from a facet, shattering the morning stillness with its gurgle. One outlet shifts to another, and the churning cascade is a scattered drizzle, the pitter patter of clouds made tame. I shed my second skin as steam shyly starts to streak my splitting image. The corners of my likeness obfuscate, and I glance at my form rendered back onto me as I step from shiver to shower. Flocks of geese take laps beneath my skin, prickling the surface under the sudden heat. I am warm again. I am awake.

Time collapses; the deluge is reduced to a drip and a drop too soon. The collateral to my cleanliness has colonized my kindly glass; the edges of my body blur and bleed behind condensation's facade. I overflow into my space, made mine through time and trinket; I expand into my things and into my memories, and I feel the presences of those who came before, those who will come after. This inviolable place is but a gate we pass through, and when it crumbles into sediment it, too, shall be subducted.

I remove the lingering liquid from all the places I can reach, and I push forth from my created subtropic only to be jolted by a chill that never left. *It's fucking cold.* I hurry to arm myself against my body's bid to heat the world; selfishly, I seek to trap my temperature inside long sleeves and double socks to rally, once more, against thermal equilibrium. My choices have closed off portions of myself from the world; each option afforded to me seems to promise the same conventional outcome.

How easily we forget that there are always alternatives.