

Migration

Look around. There is only darkness. No warmth, no sound except the damp, rhythmic contortions of your internal organs.

You walk. The soles of your feet slip against thin sheets of ice. Your toes go numb. Your nails turn glacial blue and fall off, but you feel no pain and cannot see. Branching frost grows on the blunt flats of your heels, spreading up your ankles and wrapping around your bare hips. You extend your mind into your limbs. The network of nerves is gone, replaced by crystalline structures of frost. You cannot tell if you are flesh or ice.

Your footsteps do not echo, absorbed by hidden passages of snow. If you leave prints, they are faint and you cannot see them. You walk, but you are not sure whether you are walking. You cannot see yourself. The frozen walls are part of the darkness, you are part of the darkness too.

Light.

Candles.

Huddled forms. Faint pink light curling through bloodless fingers, illuminating exposed backs. Narrow waists and wrists like your own. Feet, encased in ice, fused to dimly translucent floor.

You walk towards the light, towards them. They shift, like blue jays caught in a snowstorm, shuffling, rigid limbs moving in awkward synchronicity. Ice on the tendons of their feet shatters, echoing. They turn and watch you, unblinking, eyelids frozen to brow bone. Candlelight flashes against the smooth, luminous grey walls. You stare back. One extends an arm, offering you a candle. You take it, fumbling until half rests upon your chest, half against the unyielding flat of your palm. They turn away, shifting, shuffling again. You join them. Wait with them.

The darkness is perpetual, but the candles burn eternally. You wait, a torpid mass of unblinking eyes. More come. At some point, there are no more candles, so you replicate geometrically: two, three, six, eight to a single flame. The walls get closer.

Spicules of ice form deep within your abdomen. They penetrate the hollows of your stomachs and split your skins. Your internal organs fall out, burnished amber strewn across ice. You hunch over, nursing new emptiness. You see the white twists of your spines, splinted together with rivulets of ice.

You are soundless. Mute to the cold, cold mute to you.

A piercing shriek, a rush, stone crumbling to floor. A fallen hawk. You gather around the small body, pile of dirty feathers illuminated by pillars of cold winter sun. Feel the soft warmth, the still-beating heart. Turn your heads to the source of light.