

We are as children

There are massive announcements.

We assemble along roads we had always seen but never noticed, leading to places we never thought to inquire about. Once on site we are supposed to assemble our buildings as we talk to people we vaguely know but don't really know. We are children in this, once playing as adults. We discuss the quirks of a nailer for fastening joists as we build, whereas we should really be discussing what brought us here.

Deep down we already know.

A lot of people are late building their homes. They come, wanting to share. Everything that people have been building in their lives- relationships, education, religion-has just been realized to be for nought and completely irrelevant. Time shall be rewritten, as it has been countless of times earlier. No one is upset. We are as children told to come in from playing, only instead of dropping toys mid play, it is our lives.

I'm not expecting my brother to land there. Yet he arrives last minute with his family. I am suddenly embarrassed I hadn't tried to alert him sooner. He doesn't have enough time to make a shelter (or even a bed) for his family. It is decided that he will take the floor while his wife and young child will share a single bed we can spare.

I talk to their young child. It is the first time she smiles at me, at anyone. I confer with my wife. I suggest to my brother the three take the queen bed I have had time to build, and my wife and I can make do with his single. Our kids are almost grown, and we simply count

ourselves lucky to just have them in the same room as us. They themselves have another bed to share nearby.

A person I haven't seen in over thirty years wishes out loud she had brought some water. I inform her I have a case and can spare some. (I don't pretend to care enough to ask how she's been.) I offer it now and while thanking me she says she will just get it tomorrow. By tomorrow, this as we know it will be all over and we won't be waking back up for a thousand, perhaps even millions of years. She doesn't know this or refuses to accept it.

I both know and accept it. I drink water now.

THE HOUR is near upon us. Yet even as I have those closest to me with me, I lament for others I cannot say bye to.

I pretend to need the bathroom, sending out a few last minute messages. I'm unsure phones even work at this point. I come from the bathroom to find my youngest, (and most unique in her own way) is trying to secure the attic door. Minutes before I hadn't even noticed an attic door.

"Don't worry," I try to calm her. "Nobody will come. Nobody will be left."

"We can't leave it unlocked," she insists. Her face and tone remind me of the long gone four year old girl, crying unnecessarily as she was afraid the kitchen sink would overflow with dish water. I help her lock the door.

Outside, I hear people are still driving. I'm incredulous they haven't heeded the warnings. They shall be alone for this.

And very cold.

My wife is almost asleep. I tell everyone I love them. Not the generic “love you” from the past, even if it meant no less. Putting the third word, a simple “I” in the phrase, makes the sentiment a full thirty three and a third percent longer to say and hear. More bang for its buck.

Many around us are already asleep. Many of those still awake begin to forget their words. I hold my wife’s hand. My eyes are heavy and filled with emotion. I was always too soft.

Then there is nothing, for this is the end.