

The Last Page

The Second Wave

After the earthquake and tsunami of February 27th, 2010 in Chile – in the voice of every man white enough to be interviewed on CNN

They're coming.

After the first wave

Comes the next.

After the ground opened up

Trying to swallow us,

Came the water.

Came the water.

Came the water.

It took the light,

It took the walls,

It took our voices.

And left us fish

In houses

. . . what's left of houses. . .

It left boat splinters

Mixed with house splinters.

It left disease;

Drowned dogs still chained to

kennels,

Bobbing obscene.

The stench of bodies,

Somewhere. . .

. . . under something. . .

. . . somewhere.

Those too old to run,

Those too young to run,

Those too weak, too crippled, too

pregnant.

Somewhere. . .

. . . under something.

Their stench piercing the silence.

The wave took life,

Left death,

Took life,

Left death,

Took life,

Left death,

And darkness.

And now, with the morning sun

Comes belief, comes horror

And the stench

And the retch.

But I can't sit

And wail at the sky,

Because they're coming.

I heard it from a barefoot, shirtless man

Running

Running

Through, over, amid

What used to be Main Street.

He heard it from his brother,

Who heard it from his wife,

Who heard it from a cop

With an old AM radio

Saved from the water

And fed with four double A batteries

From two forlorn remote controls

With nothing left to remotely control.

They're coming.

They swept through a supermarket in

Concepción,

Dark as the first wave,
Deadly as the first wave.
Ravaging everything in their way.

The looters are coming.

The man said,
His wife said,
The cop said:
They had sticks,
And bats,
And knives,
And guns.
And my neighbor has a daughter,
Fourteen years old,
She made it out but she's
Up on the hill wandering around
In a tank top
And some short short shorts;
What passes as pyjamas today.
Her poor father.
Her poor father,
With no house to lock her up in.
She's up there,
All skin
And budding breasts
And legs too long and straight to last.
And they're coming.

All of them.
They're coming.

Out from the ruins of the shanties
They'll come in droves,
Like animals on the hunt.
Black eyes glistening in coffee skin

– More like leather than skin –
Curved backs and matted hair,
Eyelashes thick and straight like
splinters.
Rough hands and filthy fingernails.
Rough hands and filthy fingernails,
On fourteen year old porcelain skin.

Up on the hill they say there are
hundreds
– Thousands even –
Swarming through the city
Scavenging for food
And anything else they can lay their
hands on,
Like jewelry cut from cold fingers
And fourteen year old porcelain skin.

The first wave swept away the law,
Took the jailhouse and the barracks,
Made no distinction,
Paid no respect,
To olive green or powder white,
And now there's nothing
Keeping the poor in the shanties.

No sirens, no checkpoints,
No day time television.
No law here to pacify or repress;
No state to enforce and separate.

We are alone.
And the second wave is coming.

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