

Hold For Release Till End of the World Confirmed

When he launched CNN in 1980, Ted Turner
made this promise—when *it* happens, *We'll be on,*
& that will be our last event.

The original TURNER DOOMSDAY VIDEO
only recently surfaced, long lodged & lost
in a CNN archive, sign-off segment still
slated for release upon confirmation
of Armageddon.

It's among us, now. Loose. Ready to view on
a weeknight. Any day I desire the comfort
of knowing The End will have a timetable.
Showmanship. Stellar Nielsen ratings.

But when I think of the tape playing,
the Last Day's primetime slot, I never
imagine the crash-spectacular such
a production deserves—the movie

where we trace the city-sized comet cracking
the exosphere, or the warheads lifting up-out
of their heartland silos, dusk laced
with contrail foam.

No, I think of the ways The End can sidle up
beside us. The soft catastrophes that leave
tomorrow empty & museumed, everything
still in its original packaging.

Extinction at glacial pace. Superflu, maybe.
Gamma burst. Or the Rapture. Civilization
politely winding down, until there is one,
just *one* End Times Survivor, Heir
Apparent of the Anthropocene.

& here the script calls for indulgence,
glam & camp. In a depeopled world,
The Wanderer shacks up in Graceland.
Fishes for dinner at Shedd Aquarium.

& why not surf those trafficless twelve lanes
in “The” DeLorean? An Abrams?
Bonnie & Clydes’ death-car retrofitted
with nitro & spoilers?

In The Big Alone, there is time for plunder.
Pools filled with Fiji Water. Lunch eaten off
The Constitution’s temperature-controlled
frame. Tee time atop the Space Needle.

But eventually, they know what must be done.
After calling every number they remember
& receiving no answer,

after skipping the radio dial across a day’s
worth of deadened air—when it’s certain
they are the last, the final, the now—

they’ll pillage CNN Center, find the master
DOOMSDAY tape & hear the *whir* & *chunk*
as it’s fed to the national emergency broadcast
system, signal rippling across sky
to everyone, & none.

It is done out of instinct. Posterity. The finesse
of finale, someone hitting the barroom lights.

Here is the scene: a billion television sets
filled with a little military band on a mansion
lawn. They perform “Nearer My God To Thee,”
same as the *Titanic*’s deck musicians.

It is impossible to see their faces—glitched
in low resolution, a broadcast ratio fit only
for the cathode-ray displays of yesteryear.

But it does not matter. As long as there is proof
we bowed, instead of stumbled. That we
knew enough to play ourselves out.