

When The Sun Decided to Stay

By Sara Ruiz

It feels like it only happened a week ago, but it had been months since the sun decided to stay. We had lived our lives with routine: when it was light, we brewed our coffee and brushed our teeth, walked to work and walked ourselves, and when it was dark, we watched TV and closed our eyes, dreamed asleep or sweat in close proximity, bass hurting our ears the same way alcohol burned our throats.

It was peace; to let the day be day and the night be night. Until one day, the sun decided to stay.

At first, no one knew what to really do; we tried to be the same: brush our teeth and have our coffee, walk to work and walk our dogs, pretend nothing was out of the blue, especially the sky, who still stayed the same after we passed the 24-hour mark. But slowly, after the cheap 7-dollar blackout curtains sold out from Home Depot and the bars started to close at 10, pretending wasn't so easy anymore.

It was funny, because we all thought we could stay the same, that time wouldn't change, but it did. Soon, our clocks got stuck at 00:00 and no one thought to check why. People still went to work and walked their dogs and had their coffee and brushed their teeth, but no one cared when they did it, or who they did it with; 4 AM and 4 PM were the same.

A lot of us hadn't realized we hadn't dreamt or watched TV or closed our eyes until we were all exhausted. And when we realized this, we decided to do only that, watch TV and close our eyes and dream asleep and sweat too much and drink until we closed our eyes and woke up

to the same and the same and the same and the same, music blasting with the rate of our heartbeats.

It wasn't until one of us died that we started to care again.

We had already fallen behind on our way of telling time, so we started to count our steps and calculate from there. 248 steps to cross the entire town, from the grocery store to the post office, if your feet were the size the mayors, 282 steps if you also had a dog. Every round, a new citizen replaced the old one, and there was a schedule posted on the statue in front of the coffee shop. If we were meeting for lunch, I'd tell you to call, and we would agree to meet at the start of Time, after the bald man with the poodle crossed the shop. That's usually when people slept, since the bald man with the poodle always walked a little slower than the rest.

Eventually, we built a solar-powered device on wheels, that would slowly run Time from the grocery store to the post office, and when it passed the coffee shop, it would let out a loud screeching sound, signaling that we should probably sleep now.

We soon started to go back to the way it used to be, waking up to mechanical screams, brewing our coffee and brushing our teeth, going to work and watching the streets, doing whatever we can until we hear the machine again, and then it's time to close our eyes, or sometimes, sweat in close proximity.

It was interesting because it felt robotic and erratic at the same time. We had routine again, we guess, but we started to forget the way it used to be. We created and pretended or reinvented the things like night that had died the second the sun decided to stay. None of us really knew what to do anymore. Some of us decided the extent of our existence was our shift to become Time, so when we created Mo (our solar-powered device on wheels), some of us disappeared; no longer finding purpose, no longer feeling necessary.

Those of us who stayed, tried to stay together, but sometimes the Sun becomes too much and all there is is heat, and the need to burn becomes overwhelming. So more of us burned away.

We all tried to live in a world where you could walk on Time and sleep for 400 steps and drink from one screech to another and no one would say a word, but I think we all still prayed that one day, the sun would decide to leave, and the moon would come back, and only when we finally face the dark, emerging from between trees and swimming through the stale blades of grass like smoke crawling through a burning building, will we finally feel free.