



Source: Ian Fisher and Sabrina Tavernise, 'Pope seeks unity for ancient churches', *New York Times* in *The Age online*, 01/12/06.

Tags: [intimacy](#), [dystopia](#)

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Not that I know how it ends. We haven't gotten there yet. We're working our way slowly.

Standing in this apartment when the night began, we were unable to sit, anxious with hands gripped on the counter and clasped around our empty glasses. We agreed to spend this night together. We would pass the time together as if the world weren't falling around us.

But the windows. The blank windows that look out across the streets, that document each moment, that capture every movement until its image is stamped in my memory. If he pulls the curtains closed, I can stay. If he leaves them open, I will have to go. How could I stay to watch?

If I left, I would wait alone for the next morning, if it came. If I stayed, I could sit behind the turntable with another body beside me and wait for the streets to fall, when they fall. Not that I know how it will end. We're working our way slowly.

He hasn't touched the curtains. The slightest glow has started burning behind a building across town. I can just see it, heralding the day's second dusk that will bring an unnatural, premature dawn. It was started just moments ago, and in a few minutes, it will have consumed an entire block, and, not yet satiated, continue to spread. If I stay, this is what I will watch, this glow, eating away brick walls, turning homes into kindling. Working its way slowly. But between a few moments ago and a few minutes ahead, now, the orange glow pulses, heavy with the threat to burst across the sky. Not that I know how it will end.

The glare it creates on distant windows reminds me of the last morning. The last real morning, when I walked slowly

up the hill, to work, with my books over my shoulder. 'If the sky that we look upon should tumble and fall.' The song had played on the radio the night before and was in my head that morning. I had left home early, so when the low sun hit a shop window that I was approaching, I stopped to watch the glass obscure, to peer in at the shop's beige carpet as it bled yellow. When the light stretched completely across the glass, all I could make out was the outline of my own figure.

It made me think of a morning years before, when the sunlight crept into my room slowly, creating shapes on the hardwood floor that bent and spread. I didn't have a bed frame then, my mattress sat on the floor. My head was level with these insidious, shifting shadows. I inched across the mattress until my side pressed against the wall, as the sunlight crept onto my bed. It reminded me too much of empty hands.

But on the morning that I walked to work, when the sun slid slowly across the shop front, across my reflection, I welcomed it. There was nothing else like that morning. Then the birds scattered.

Now the pulse is growing behind the building across town. Neither of us is breathing now. Here is anxiety with its concomitant curiosity, and I am planted at the window. I can't inch away. I couldn't begin to go, and I couldn't forgive myself if I stayed. To watch.

Not that I'll see how it ends. It's working its way slowly. At least we know it started beautifully.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Ella Longpre.*