The Gesture of Telephoning

Climate: Four Types of Waiting

1.
We are watching a woman in bed.
    There’s a telephone on the bedside table, and she sits naked under the covers and she waits.
    The phone rings.
    She cannot hear it, but she can see the weather in the room changing: the lamp goes out with a pop of the lightbulb and the glass in the windows turns cloudy and the wood of the closet door dries and cracks and the carpet turns sodden and squeaky and she feels a wetness creeping up through the mattress and the skin of her hands whitens and crisps and the phone stops ringing.
    She pushes the blankets away, and gets up, and unscrews the lightbulb and crushes it in her hand and picks a shard of glass out of her palm and brings it to her ear and listens.
    Then she scoops a puddle of glass out of the window with her thumb, and plugs her right ear with it, and she listens.
Then she peels a layer of cracking paint from the wood of the door of the closet with the nail of her big toe, and she pulls a scrap of it up to her ear, and she listens.

And then she blows on the carpet until it starts to come apart and a piece of it floats up and up and she catches it with her left ear and she listens.

And then she shakes the things from her ears and walks back to the mattress and puts her mouth to the foot of the bed and sucks out the moisture until her mouth is full of it and spits it into her palm and brings her head down to her hand and she listens.

Then she shakes the liquid from her skin and her fingers and she puts both hands over her ears and listens.

And then the woman gets back into bed, and pulls the covers to her shoulders. She reaches for the phone and picks up the receiver and dials the number of the one who has just whispered to her from the fragments of her bedroom, and she waits for him to pick up so that she can change his weather.

2.

We are watching a man in bed.

There's a telephone on the bedside table, and he sits naked under the covers and he waits.

The phone rings.

He starts, and as he picks up the receiver he can see the room changing: a long crack forms in the wall to his right, and the glass shatters out of the window to his left, and a hole opens up in the ceiling above him as the plaster closes in on itself, and the floor starts to shake, and though his body is being thrown back and forth on the bed he manages to reach across to the table and replace the receiver on the cradle of the phone and the shaking stops.

He pushes the blankets away and gets up and surveys his room. He puts one ear to the crack in the wall, and then walks across the room and puts the other to the glassless window, and then he climbs onto the bed and jumps and jumps until he gets high enough to put his head through the hole in the ceiling, and
each time he listens to the pop and crackle and stumble of the voices of broken things.

And then the man falls back into bed and pulls the covers to his neck. He picks up the phone and listens for the dial tone and presses the numbers of the woman who has just surprised him, and he waits for her so that he can surprise her, too.

3.
We are watching a woman in bed who does not like to be surprised.

There’s still a telephone on the bedside table, and still she sits naked under the covers and she waits but she does not remember what she is waiting for, so maybe she is not really waiting at all.

The phone rings.

She cannot hear it, but as the weather of her room changes, so does she: the red and the blue of her heart turn silver, and the pink of her skin turns green, and the breath in her lungs turns yellow, and black of her eyes turns white and the whites turn black and her lips go yellow as the breath escapes her as she tries to listen to the colors as they change inside of her but the message is too much, and the phone stops, and so does she.

4.
We are watching a man in bed.

There’s a telephone on the bedside table, and he sits naked under the covers and he waits.

But the phone does not ring.