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Things I Forgot to Tell You about the End of the World

Milkmen returned to their jobs.

Sales of private jets and air purifiers went through the roof.

There were shortages, but they were short-lived: coins, toilet paper, bleach.

One morning the whole state was on fire. I woke up with a red sun rising. The outline of trees hazed with smoke. Dust storms. I couldn't breathe.

Hospital workers got tired, refused to smile. Police were shooting unarmed men in the back. Schools shut down and children whooped in the street. There was an army of kids with long hair singing praise songs in the street, calling it a prayer protest. A group of men with automatic weapons chanted loudly about their rights.

Sea turtle populations recovered. I saw otters and black-tailed deer, and a herd of elk, at least a hundred of them. Very few butterflies, but the hummingbirds and finches showed up, gossiping and fighting, at birdbaths.

People gardened more. We said goodbye to our dead through video screens. I began wearing gloves to leave the house. We all became obsessed with cleaning.

Other than that, everything remained the same: government structures were questioned, women wore sneakers instead of heels, lipstick sales dropped, despite calls to the contrary. Tequila sales soared.

The magnetic poles continued to shift; giant craters appeared in the ice. We didn't believe any prophets. I dyed my hair pink and stayed up late reading Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, and apocalypse books written in the 1890s. We all had coping mechanisms.

Some whispered their kisses through the phone. We all missed touch. All the animals in shelters got adopted. In the mornings, despite everything, birdsong.