

## Heat

Andrea Morgeson

### i.

I took a class in college and we spent every week studying a new subject, a new form of the same medium. Our fifth week we watched Spike Lee's classic;

“Let me tell you the story of Right Hand, Left Hand. It's a tale of good and evil. Hate: it was with this hand that Cain iced his brother. Love: these five fingers, they go straight to the soul of man. The right hand: the hand of love. The story of life is this: static. One hand is always fighting the other hand, and the left hand is kicking much ass. I mean, it looks like the right hand, Love, is finished. But hold on, stop the presses, the right hand is coming back. Yeah, he got the left hand on the ropes, now, that's right. Ooh, it's a devastating right and Hate is hurt, he's down. Left-Hand Hate KOed by Love.”

A tale of the hottest day on record in Brooklyn, New York. Where tensions boiled over, ending in disaster. My first experience learning about police brutality, at age 18. This happens? This is allowed? Why didn't I know.

My teacher stood at the front of the classroom. She says that the film demonstrates how the heat of the day led to aggression and distrust, to a final confrontation that incorporated everyone into one mass outside where someone was killed unjustly.

In Psychology we learn about correlations. How they can be misconstrued. “Ice cream sales rise when crime does,” she says. “Therefore, buying ice cream leads to murder.”

She explains there is no correlation between the two, but that more people are likely to buy ice cream when it's hot outside, which is also when crime increases.

“But why?” I ask. She looks caught off guard. I am deviating from the point.

“Why does crime increase when it's hot?” I am a little concerned. We live in Florida.

“I'm not sure,” she responds, and moves on. I am left there to wonder.

Is it because there are more people outside when it's hot? Is it because people who choose to live in hot weather are prone to commit crimes? What does that say about everyone sitting in this room with me? Their families? My neighbors?

Why is this not a concern to everyone else? Is this normal?

## ii.

With each passing year we are told that our planet is headed towards a fatal future. Carbon emissions, factory farming, pollution, waste, the list goes on and on.

We shop and we pick up household items with the little green leaf seal that shouts “CLEAN” and we feel better.

The Great Barrier Reef was once thought to potentially hold a cure for many cancers. She’s dwindled so significantly that the world mourned the loss, trending worldwide for several days before we said, “That’s a shame, that’s terrible,” and kept going.

Florida, Texas, Louisiana, they prepare for hurricanes like they are heading to battle, buying plywood en masse and stocking up on canned goods. Schools are canceled and beach towns evacuated. Each year the weathermen excitedly chant how this is a storm with “unprecedented power, the likes that have never been seen on record until now.” We hunker down, most survive, and we return to normal before we have time to question the normalcy with which we treat this ever growing occurrence.

A map constructed by unnamed experts is released, showing the predicted trajectory of our planet, our country once icebergs begin to melt at a quicker rate. Our peninsula, dangling by a thread and looking like it’s about to break off into the ocean completely, is taken over by blue, moment by moment, more and more, until there is nothing left but what looks like twenty square miles, dead center. My neighborhood, essentially.

## iii.

Central Florida Gothic is real.

It’s the dimming and sand ridden houses made of stucco and fading magenta paint.

It’s the cone shaped Twistee Treat drive thru that stays open until 11 in the deserted strip mall that now serves as a spot to park your car and eat your dripping dessert before it cedes to the humidity.

It’s the palm tree lined developments where one house design fits all, with steel enforced roofs but vinyl slick floors.

It’s the ebb and flow of visitors from other states who sit in Olive Garden booths with various Mickey Mouse ears and bone dry swimsuits as attire.

It's the stereotypes you hear as jokes; "Florida Man releases pet Komodo dragon after not being able to afford its diet of whole cats." "Florida Man attacks neighbor with illegal fireworks." ("Florida Man Is Making Me Look Bad Since Moving To Chicago.")

The heat sits on us forebodingly and it never takes a vacation because it lives where most do, so what's the point? Breeds of dogs with thick coats pant and look towards me as if to plead for help. Please, no, anything but a walk outside. I sit in the swimming pool at my grandmother's community complex where the water matches the air in temperature so it feels like I'm floating in lukewarm nothing.

The foliage looks alien and other-worldly, made all the more eerie when the brush catches fire, you smell it before you see the thick, condensed smoke that spreads out above the flat Earth with nothing but room to grow and no one rushing to stop its progress.

The problem with it is that there is always so much.

More people move there every day, to the same cities, with the same buildings and roads that cannot fit them in comfortably.

There is so much water around, there's nowhere to run when a storm decides to pay a violent visit.

There is so much heat and it only expands and increases with each passing year.

There is so much the heat can contain, diseases and dangerous animals and the aggression and the violence and it never stops, never ends, until the ocean grows bigger and rises up and swallows it whole.