

NATALIE E. ILLUM

Reset

I've always had a strange relationship with time. I look up at the clock and it's usually 2:35pm or 5:25pm—an analog or digital reminder of my childhood house number and birthdate. Or 11/07, the date you left. Some things are stuck in time; the way my mind used to be

a cuckoo clock. Or an alarm clock I crafted from the train's whistle and rumble across my front yard. How my father's hangover stopped every morning at 6:21am. Did I ever tell you how I can predict exactly how many minutes a song will last, down to the second? Strange, how your pacing still echoes like a second hand

throughout the empty apartment. How I think of stopwatches as wishbones now, wishing you would have slept like a metronome, its constant rhythm keeping time to my breathing.

But I know a clock isn't a tether. That laying on your chest was never a promise you could keep longer than the next sunrise. Still, most things will bend toward the light. Pull warmth from wherever possible. Most people can make a sundial out of anything, like I did.

Your shoulder blade was 12:00pm. Your left hand at 6:00, your face always told me I should have been home by now. 2:35am.

Sometimes you glow behind my eyelids. I blink and you are there again. 5:25am. I roll over to touch your chest, the skeleton key to your clockwork heart, and, strangely, it's gone.