

## **Tempus transit gelidum (CB 153)**

by mazaher

January 26th, 2012

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*March 28th, 1898*

"God is jealous of what we do. But I'll fight God for you. For us."

Patrick's voice is muffled by the pillow.

He is stretched face down on the mattress, a sheen of sweat on his long back, his narrow hips. His hair is damp at the nape of his neck and his recent pleasure still glows in every line of his hard supple body.

Yet his words are of despair.

Jack remembers the pale thin boy who faced the wolves alone and didn't move back a step, so sure of how it all would end as he stood fast and stared, wide-eyed and unflinching.

The end had been rewritten that one time, when Jack had come between him and the harm they'd have done him, but after all these years Patrick still feels he is the lamb marked for slaughter. The black one. The guilty one. A sacrifice to irate gods, who will not be appeased by anything short of blood, and surely not by the repentance Patrick won't offer anyway.

Time after time, Jack is reminded that this is a matter of course with Patrick, and time after time he finds he can't stomach Patrick's acceptance.

Especially as there is precious little else that Patrick is likely to accept without question, ever.

"I very much doubt that God has anything to do with this. But if He has-- if He has, do you really believe that He prefers us to be separate in fear and hate and grief, rather than together in joy, taking pleasure from each other in this short strange interlude between two chasms of blind eternity that is the span of our lives?"

Jack leans over Patrick, runs his hand flat from his tailbone up to his nape, fingers spreading finally to grasp a handful of the fair strands and shaking them gently.

"There is no enemy to fight this time, Patrick. As frightening as it is, the sky is empty. We are alone down here. Free. For ourselves. For ...love. If you wish."

A heavy word.

It seeps through the silence, and Jack already regrets it.

He should know better by now.

He should know not to speak about love.

Especially in late March, when spring is gathering momentum and new life tumbles down along the days like a waterfall swollen with melting snow.

But Patrick is turning now, and he pulls Jack down to cover him, and he whispers in his ear, very low, very quiet, as though testing the words:

"I'd steal joy to give you. I'd steal pleasure. But I don't need to steal love, because love has me."

And Jack finds he has nothing to add.

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