

want to stop time, but at another time. They want to freeze their own children at the center of time.

Lovers who return find their friends are long gone. After all, lifetimes have passed. They move in a world they do not recognize. Lovers who return still embrace in the shadows of buildings, but now their embraces seem empty and alone. Soon they forget the centuries-long promises, which to them lasted only seconds. They become jealous even among strangers, say hateful things to each other, lose passion, drift apart, grow old and alone in a world they do not know.

Some say it is best not to go near the center of time. Life is a vessel of sadness, but it is noble to live life, and without time there is no life. Others disagree. They would rather have an eternity of contentment, even if that eternity were fixed and frozen, like a butterfly mounted in a case.

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Imagine a world in which there is no time. Only images.

A child at the seashore, spellbound by her first glimpse of the ocean. A woman standing on a balcony at dawn, her hair down, her loose sleeping silks, her bare feet, her lips. The curved arch of the arcade

near the Zähringer Fountain on Kramgasse, sandstone and iron. A man sitting in the quiet of his study, holding the photograph of a woman, a pained look on his face. An osprey framed in the sky, its wings outstretched, the sun rays piercing between feathers. A young boy sitting in an empty auditorium, his heart racing as if he were on stage. Footprints in snow on a winter island. A boat on the water at night, its lights dim in the distance, like a small red star in the black sky. A locked cabinet of pills. A leaf on the ground in autumn, red and gold and brown, delicate. A woman crouching in the bushes, waiting by the house of her estranged husband, whom she must talk to. A soft rain on a spring day, on a walk that is the last walk a young man will take in the place that he loves. Dust on a windowsill. A stall of peppers on Marktgasse, the yellow and green and red. Matterhorn, the jagged peak of white pushing into the solid blue sky, the green valley and the log cabins.

The eye of a needle. Dew on leaves, crystal, opalescent. A mother on her bed, weeping, the smell of basil in the air. A child on a bicycle in the Kleine Schanze, smiling the smile of a lifetime. A tower of prayer, tall and octagonal, open balcony, solemn, surrounded by arms. Steam rising from a lake in early morning. An open drawer. Two friends at a café, the lamplight illuminating one friend's face, the other in shadow. A cat watching a bug on the window. A young woman on a bench, reading a letter, tears of joy in her green eyes. A great field, lined with cedar and spruce. Sunlight, in long angles through the window in late afternoon. A massive tree fallen, roots sprawling in air, bark, limbs still green. The white of a sailboat, with the wind behind it, sails billowed like wings of a giant white bird. A father and son alone at a restaurant, the father sad and staring down at the tablecloth. An oval window, looking out on fields of hay, a wooden cart, cows, green and purple in the

afternoon light. A broken bottle on the floor, brown liquid in the crevices, a woman with red eyes. An old man in the kitchen, cooking breakfast for his grandson, the boy gazing out the window at a white painted bench. A worn book lying on a table beside a dim lamp. The white on water as a wave breaks, blown by wind. A woman lying on her couch with wet hair, holding the hand of a man she will never see again. A train with red cars, on a great stone bridge with graceful arches, a river underneath, tiny dots that are houses in the distance. Dust motes floating in sunlight through a window. The thin skin in the middle of a neck, thin enough to see the pulse of blood underneath. A man and woman naked, wrapped around each other. The blue shadows of trees in a full moon. The top of a mountain with a strong steady wind, the valley falling away on all sides, sandwiches of beef and cheese. A child wincing from his father's slap, the father's lips twisted in anger, the

child not understanding. A strange face in the mirror, gray at the temples. A young man holding a telephone, startled at what he is hearing. A family photograph, the parents young and relaxed, the children in ties and dresses and smiling. A tiny light, far through a thicket of trees. The red at sunset. An eggshell, white, fragile, unbroken. A blue hat washed up on shore. Roses cut and adrift on the river beneath the bridge, with a château rising. Red hair of a lover, wild, mischievous, promising. The purple petals of an iris, held by a young woman. A room of four walls, two windows, two beds, a table, a lamp, two people with red faces, tears. The first kiss. Planets caught in space, oceans, silence. A bead of water on the window. A coiled rope. A yellow brush.