

Bathtub

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Johnny woke up, shivered, put on his robe over his sweats, got back got back under the covers and went to sleep. Two hours later, the alarm by the TV woke up a still chilly Johnny Black.

Johnny turned on the shower and used the plug from the kitchen sink to fill the bathtub up. He got in, turned the water up till it was a little more than warm, then lay down under the hot, pounding stream from the shower head. The water always seemed to cool off by the time it hit the tub -- maybe because of the cool air in the room. Well, soon the room would warm up as it filled with the hot water vapor pouring out of the glass shower.

Johnny put his hands under his head and lay back all the way so the water filled his ears. Now he heard the shower hitting the water in the tub from underwater. Everything seemed a lot quieter now. Johnny felt tired and dizzy and glad to be motionless, resting, quiet. Everything felt perfect. The water landing was still a little warm, but the water filling the tub was the perfect temperature. Johnny couldn't think how he could be happier -- maybe if he didn't have to go to work in an hour, but right now that seemed a long way off. Johnny closed his eyes and rested peacefully, slipping in and out of a half dream of floating through warm liquid clouds.

Suddenly, Johnny felt very cold. Something was wrong. He was no longer tired, but he couldn't tell why. As he opened his eyes, he became aware of the fact that the temperature around him was much cooler than it had been a moment ago -- not cold, but not the perfect, dreamy bath he had gotten used to. As soon as he started to look around, his mind absorbed exactly what was wrong. It had been hours since he had closed his eyes. The bathtub had overflowed a long time ago and the bathroom floor was flooded! The carpets were soggy, and the room had a stuffy smell to it.

Somehow, Johnny felt in no hurry to do anything. It was clear that this had gone on so long that a few more minutes wouldn't hurt anything. John gazed up at the bathroom window, a skylight he had built himself years ago. There it stood, miles above his head. Johnny suspected it was about noon. He could feel how pruned his hands were, with wrinkles all over. He could hear scratching on the outside of the glass. He must not have closed

the door to the bathroom all the way because now his cat was sitting on the toilet, apparently trying to get into the flooded tub. John had a vague thought about how cats weren't supposed to like water as he watched the blurry shape of the cat through the fogged up shower curtain, then he closed his eyes again.

Now, it was definitely colder. Without even opening his eyes, Johnny could see that it was now dark. No light passed through his eyelids at all. He could feel the cool evening air on his face, but for some reason the bath water had gotten warmer. Johnny had been hungry in his sleep, but now that feeling was beginning to pass. He felt curious, as though there was something he needed to think about, but he couldn't focus on what. He felt exhausted, unable to move or even open his eyes. He could hear the cat actually meowing from somewhere outside the tub, probably wanting to be fed, but there was nothing he could do for her.

He wondered how long the hot water would last. He wondered about the damage to the carpeting in the apartment. He wished he could see the sunshine through the skylight. He thought back to his dream about the clouds, and about how warm he had felt then, and how warm he felt now, and how unhappy he had been when he thought he had to go to work, and how relieved he was to find out that he had been able to avoid it, and how peaceful he felt right now. Then, slowly, without opening his eyes, Johnny suddenly became aware that he was floating through the clouds again.