Mortal City

Dar Williams

She never should have rented this apartment in the Mortal City
The cold comes though every crack she puts her hand up to
The radiator's broken so she has to use electric heatAnd tonight was the first date with the brother
Of the guy she worked next to
He lived a couple streets away, he listened, he had things to say
She asked him up for dinner sometime, sometime was tonightThe radio gave updates on the ice storm while she made the dinner
They said from all the talk you shouldn't drive or even walk and this just in
We're asking everyone to turn off their power, they need it at the hospitalShe ran around pulling plugs, then she called him up
Maybe now they shouldn't meet, he said that he would brave the streets
She met him at the door with a blanket and a candle
Saying, "I heard it on the radio, I had to turn my power off"He said, "You're not the only one, the streets were dark tonight
It was like another century
With dim lamps and candles lighting up the icy trees
And the clouds and a covered moon"She said, "What kind of people make a city where you can't see the sky
And you can't feel the ground?
I tell you something, I have this feeling that this city's dying"
He said, "It's not dying, it's the people who are dying"She said, "Yes yes, I think the people are dying and nobody cares
We had all this technology, our dreams were bold and vague
And then one city got bad planners, one city got the plague"He asked, "Why did you move here?" She said, "For the job, for the job
And I've been so lonely here, so lonely, there's no one I can talk to
And I don't even know your brother"He smiled and said, "Sometimes at night I walk out by the river
The city's one big town, the water turns it upside down
People found this city because they love other people
They want their secretaries, they want their power lunches""And think about tonight, I heard the same newscast you did
I unplugged everything, I looked out the window and I think the city heard
I watched as one by one the lights went off
So they could give their power to the hospital"They ate in silence while she thought this over
They sat together in a dark room in the Mortal City
Shifting in their blankets so they wouldn't get spaghetti on themThen came the awkward moment after dinner, what to do
The ice was still falling, the streets were still dangerous
The cabs were not running and this neighborhood was not the greatestThey both looked at the space where a couch would've been

She felt her stomach sink, she felt like she could hardly thinkShe said, "I never should have rented this apartment in the Mortal City
The cold comes through every crack I put my hand up to
The radiator doesn't work, I have to use electric heat"That settled it, they would both sleep in her bed, it was a matter of survival
She brought out teeshirts, sweatshirts, sweatpants, socks, hats
If there was ever any thought of what would happen in that bed tonightThere was no question now, they could barely move
They were wrapped up like ornaments waiting for another seasonThey lay in bed, they listened to the pelting ice
He said, "My brother's not a bad guy, he's just quiet
I wished you liked this city", she said, "Maybe I do""I think I have a special kind of hearing tonight
I hear the neighbors upstairs, I hear my heart beating
I hear one thousand hearts beating at the hospital"And one thousand hearts by their bedsides waiting
Saying that's my love in the white gown
We are not lost in the Mortal City
We are not lost in the Mortal City

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