

## **Williams Dar**

### **"Mortal City"**

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She never should have rented this apartment in Mortal  
City  
The cold comes through every crack she puts her hand  
up to  
The radiator's broken, so she has to use electric heat.

And 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 tonight.

The 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 hospital.

She 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, you know 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 them.  
Then 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 greatest.

They both looked at the space where the couch  
would've been  
She felt her stomach sink, she felt like she could hardly  
think

She said, I never should have rented this apartment in  
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 tonight  
There was no question now  
They could barely move  
They were wrapped up like ornaments waiting for  
another season.

They lay in bed, they listened to the pelting ice  
He said my brother's not a bad guy, he's just quiet  
I wish 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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