3 moments of an explosion
by China Mieville

1. The demolition is sponsored by Burger King. Everyone is used, now, to rotvertising, the spelling of company names & reproduction of hip product logos in the mottle & decay of subtly gene-tweaked decomposition - Apple paying for the breakdown of apples, the bitten-fruit sigil becoming visible on mouldy cores. Explosion marketing is new. Stuff the right nanos into squibs & missiles so the blasts of war machines inscribe BAE & Raytheon’s names in fire on the sky above the cities those companies ignite. Today we’re talking about nothing so bleak. It’s an old warehouse, too unsafe to let stand. The usual crowd gathers at the prescribed distance. The mayor hands the plunger to the kid who, courtesy of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, will at least get to do this. She beams at the cameras & presses, & up goes the bang, & down slides the old ruin to the crowd’s cheer, & above them all the dust clouds billow out Have It Your Way in soft scudding font.

2. It’s a fuck of a fine art, getting that pill into you so the ridiculous tachyon-buggered MDMA kicks at just the right instant & takes you out of time. This is extreme squatting. The boisterous, love-filled crew jog through their overlapping stillness together & bundle towards the building. Three make it inside before they slip back into chronology. Theirs are big doses & they have hours - subjectively - to explore the innards of the edifice as it hangs, slumping, its floors now pitched & interrupted mid-eradication, its corridors clogged with the dust of the hesitating explosion. The three explorers have bought climbing gear, & they haul themselves up the new random slopes inside the soon-to-be-rubble, racing to outrace their own metabolisms, to reach the top floor of the shrugging building before they come down & back into time. They make it. Two of them even make it down again & out again. They console themselves over the loss of their companion by insisting to each other that it was deliberate, her last stumble, that she had been slowing on purpose, so the ecstasy would come out through her pores allowing the explosion to rise up like applause & swallow her. It would hardly be an unprecedented choice for urban melancholics such as these.

3. You can’t say, you can’t tell yourself that it’s the intruder’s spirit doing any of this, that there’s a lesson here. It’s not her nor any of the other people who’ve died in its rooms, in any of the 126 years of the big hall’s existence. It’s not even the memories, wistful or otherwise, of the building. The city’s pretty used to those by now. The gusts, the thick choking wafts that fill the streets of the estate that’s built in the space the warehouse once occupied, are the ghost of the explosion itself. It is clearly wanting something. It’s clearly sad - you can tell in its angles & the slow coiling & unfolding of its self, that manifests & evanesces faster even than its material predecessor smoke did. A vicar is called: book, candle, bell. The explosion, at last, lies down. As if, though, the two drug enthusiasts who got in & out of its last moment insist, out of pity, rather than because it must.