

SALT

Dilution in Parts

: | 1 | :

There it is again.

*The mystery in the steps of the few. The cautious, inescapable pulling of
flesh on the inside of my ribs.*

Air concedes to my lungs.

*I am overwhelmed with exhaustion, pain, and the terror of knowing that
when the air leaves in an exhale: it could be long before it comes back.*

It could be a lifetime.

And it goes.

: || 1 || :

*Petrichor. The Dr. said it's a scientific thing. Our bodies, like the insides of the few animals left,
know it as more than a scent. It is among the few un-synesthetic feelings that are science based.*

*"It triggers a sense of eternal earth: a notion of some innate connection with an mother
made, ultimately, of all the same things we are. In a cosmic sense."*

The Dr. had lived near us my whole life.

.

The Grid will make this easier.

It clicks.

A coming of dust coming undone.

But the taste of some other air will make it significantly more difficult. Maybe even to see in some other sort of way.

The Bolt grinds open the Chamber.

The flat and even ground--sculpted by millions of footsteps every second every day will balance the sights almost mechanically. My Pants tighten at the knee when I bend down. I tug and roll the left leg to just above my calf. When I was young, I would do this before wading into a dense forest. Looking for puddles or rivers after the rain to dirty myself in.

I wonder what sort of thoughts I will have in this moment when I am there. What things will fall in the static surrounding of filled gravity. Patient and pervasive I imagine the anxiety of just breathing to be palpable.

As even as the Great Lake before evaporation I stare.

I see the sight of the Rifle come to connection with me.

Farther out in the distance is some unwavering thing: the closest of the brush bunnies that have ventured to the brushes sheltered by the dunes for a simple activity of life: eating. I think of the people we have and the ones who fed them by feeding the worms who feed the lettuce who feed the bunnies who--*The target will be bigger, and louder --* I fire and the sand shakes from the Rifle, from my hand, and back to the desert.

In middle school, in Eden, we had a class bunny. We spent an entire class period deciding on a name. The me then remembers seeing a book in an aisle at the library with my mom. It had a tawny colored rabbit looking out to the sky. "Watership." I had asked my Mom what the word meant, and she had knelt and said, "It doesn't mean anything exactly. It's a name, like your name" and smiled. But I insisted, I remember, that only people could have names. And she laughed and said: "Is that right?"

I wanted to name the bunny in class Watership, but the teacher looked at me with an intent which caused her glasses to fall to the tip of her nose.

The Barrel is alive now as the sky is when the sun ignites the Uintas. It pulls another round in and I trap first the image of another Watership in the sights; it falls to a soundlessness in the sand. I exhale and count it out.

1.

.

.

. I unslung the Rifle and the metal sets into the horizon of my right palm.

5

2.

.

. I walk with my Boots caving the sand beneath to dunes. The bunny's static image – my breath held.

.

3.

.

.

. The thin ring of sun crests and disappears over the red spires of sand. Centuries old; crumbling vestiges of resilience. So many eyes from so many walks of life have glossed across them turning them into paintings, pictures, and pinned moments in memory.

4.

.

. Marbles for eyes, the bunnies stare from 5 feet apart of each other. Four orbs of darkness joined only by coincidental death.

5.

I exhale: 1-2-- The coughs tasted metallic and of rose hip inside the Bandana. But 5 is a good day. 5 means the oppressive pollution from the city miles and miles away was dampened by the snow.

5 means the stores will fill in time for the night.

I step with the tender feeling I feel I owe to the bunnies in my hand. The sand parts in an oval print under the Boots-- I tilt the Goggles off and they hang around my neck. All the way on the other side of my nose, back beyond in a length that the freeway to Logan must have felt like, is this golden singe of dusk. Past that into the parts of the land absent to me, is on coming darkness. The gnarls and furrows of a furious vibrant life from this distance is an unknown waiting.

When I was a child, this waiting was peaceful and full of wonder-- a death tethered by an absent knowledge. A slender taste of iodine and chalk I remember it as when I swung alone at night on our porches swing.

Now, there only waits the actual wild: the absolute desperation of wandering wildlife.

Or worse: Workers.

6

Already I can see their hunting honey hue of lights.

I count it out.

1

2

3.

And in a deadlock agreement of self and sand, sprint the quarter mile back Inside.

:|2|:

Inside

Do the count.

1.

..

[2 PSI/3 by volume]

"N' enough."

You look down and see.

"Done on less."

1.

..

These are the sharpest, the noisiest, the deepest clamors of my putrefied moments. The pinprick black orb in my vision. A trace of iron in the back of my tongue must mean I've been holding on too long again.

"We both held too long."

"All days."

"I can patch..."

"Don't..."

You stare and there is the metal in your eyes reflecting that pain:
the knots of oxygen diluting from my blood.

"I have."

You patch and my chest climbs.

1.

...

2.

..

[2.7 PSI/ 1 by Volume]

"You did this so we would/show me count."

"And it goes-- don't worry."

*When was the last time we showed love in some other way? In a
flight of frivolity – maybe that swimming session before the quake.
Maybe in the trees by the beach. Maybe now when I breathe too
much looking for your eyes.*

I curl my gloves into your jacket and zip it shut higher. A
small nod comes from under your hood, and I tell myself a
smile as well.

"And it goes.

Before night."

We slip over the dust and on to the long hallways of streets
towards the Structure nearest to the chasm. Its shadow a
slender expanse of decomposed air, and ousted streetlights.

*Such soft things as moths' wings find no air
To be.*

A

Poem.

Builds within and without me

Here.

A looming presence of all the other Insiders watches us like a
feeling of being watched at home when you turn out the lights
for bed. In this hallway made by that shadow and the rail
overhead, broken glass has rolled and tumbled to the corners
of locked buildings where they turn to opaque marbles.

*What now feels so long ago, the dead trees would give way to this
Structures full sight when first built. I sat staring at it one winter day,
waiting for you in your works parking lot.*

The corner to the chasm comes quickly as these memories fill me
to distract from the profound trauma that furls in wait for me.
*I reflected, then, on the town meetings we had where authorities filled us
in on their appearance alongside the new rail that wouldn't go out to
anyone. The rail to the Inland Port, approved, built, and whirring with
business for all the elite in Salt Lake in under 3 months.*

*We watched the rails, the trains, the people cloud to gather what wealth would be spared for
them.*

I see you look to me in this moment we share.
We turn the corner to the Salt Mine near the Temple Square
Structure.

And
as meticulous as a splinter sinking under your fingernail,
a bag is filled, and we leave that corner as the ring of bullets
follow.

No air sounds like "nowhere."

"Lucky it is snowing" my chest fuller now.

I say at the Return: 4 PSI we split.

"Lucky..."

A new shape in your spine sends me to you. There is an
unusual grey in the forming snow, and you do.

You do smile.

I sit.

I see the seam in you; just above where your belt is. I do the
count.

My chest is a clean cave vacuumed of air.

1.

2.

3. You move your hands to mine.

4.

5.

*My mind is a null void cease of light knowing only irreparable
darkness.*

6. You do it slowly and with an intentionality that makes me
believe in a light of forever.

You take off your goggles and in your lips the smile comes
out.

[3.8 liters/4 by volume]

“Take m...”

I blink and you cough. A shape grips me and holds back my
heart so it can't see all that is happening to you. And my lungs
buckle, and breathing is lost. I rip my goggles off. and I am the
tremors of that forever searching for temporal relevance. The
warmth of your blood grows and swells at our bellies.

“I love you, I love you...” I say feeling the oxygen waste itself
on my red, crying eyes.

“And I love you.”

There it is: the splitting enormity watching you die.

I feel and hear it as a child given life.

You unpatch your oxygen and wrap the hole in you. I refasten
the patch to mine.

“Slowly...” You say.

Clean oxygen can catch fire if done too quickly.

I blink and hold your side in. You on top of it and under me
still.

“Don't worry about speaking beloved. You don't need to.

And...”

“No.” I say.

“Not this one. This. You...”

*And how, with the creationist desire to create new, ambitious birth I
could say: no. I won't allow you and all that is you to me to simply
go. This will stay, you will stay in some irreplaceable, and perfect
way. It is the only way I can survive without you here. Knowing you
have held me in a point such as this.*

You hold me and the shimmer of my anxiety watches the
gauge count to **[2.5 PSI/3 by volume]**

“You do not go.”

*I feel this new child of grief surface and simmer to tears. It shudders
in the snow – un-warmed by me yet. I feel the strung-togetherness of
your breathing thud against the unweaving of your heart- beats. An
orchestra of eternal sweeping melodies coming to a stop. In it, the*

*echoes recess and fade. I feel myself slipping out from you- a ghost of
the what I am with you.*

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.
.

*And
You fade.*

*Then I do something too human, and too vulnerable. It lets the grief
grow to a powerful impact on the sinew in my spine. I go to say your
name...*

"Rebekka"

But

I

I catch the echo of nothing.

1.

2.

My lungs are the caverns of an all time without you.

: | 2 | : **Our Insides**

“Why don’t you unpack your bag – stay a while.”

You say when I come to the bottom. *She always does.*

“It has to weigh more than you do by now.” *It certainly holds more of Me than I do.*

“I have two,” The bunnies fall from my pack, and their eyes stare into the dust under my grasp.

“How many shots?”

“You didn’t hear?”

“I wasn’t listening for them. You know that.”

As your only child, I remember you listening to me recite my book reports the nights before I went to school.

“2.” I take my bag off one shoulder. *I remember when you would have taken my bag for me when I returned.*

“What is your count?”

“5” I say before you finish, and I take out the Knife.

You make a sudden face of slight disgust and say: “Do that where the fire is going to be please.” And walk back to where your solitary tent is, at the lowest point of the crevasse.

You stop: “Remember to drink water today?”

...I just stare.

“Please drink water today.” You say and walk the rest of the way to your tent.

I remember when we would sleep in the same canvas tent: before Dad would get woken up each night to attend to some urgent need of another couple or to convince someone the figure just beyond was another convincing yucca. He would bend his nose over the Lens all night and showing that concerned person several times an hour. Probably saying “Look” Watching them watch for a few minutes and ask, “did it move?” And they would go back to sleep. I would see his figure briefly descend from the top-rope and skulk to the tent not to be bothered till evening.

“Your father needs you on the tanks tonight.” You say looking from the tent. Your hair spilling into you just above your waist: “Thank you for the rabbits. Thank you for being a good shot.” You wink and turn away.

I would see him in the evenings, smoking: bloodshot and battered by the night wind hitting his nap-rinsed eyes. He would take his time before coming to talk to me or someone from a hunt or some other errand.

I always knew he watched me when I descended the 15-minute top rope climb from the top of the desert into our crevasse where the tents, air containers, and fires were.

When you taught me to climb, I was half the weight I am now.

Now the Belt is always on.

Always able to tie in, or un-tie or carabin' something to myself. I remember wanting more things on my belt when I learned and you would just take off all the rope, and charms, and things saying: You need to be lighter, or you'll fall.

The entrance was hidden by the passing dust in the wind, and the shear drop of depth you must enter through a crack in the sandstone double my size. To the north-east, ever mostly exposed: "The actual amount of distance that way is our greatest advantage." He always told someone.

Still the fires were only held down lower, and never when it was clear out so the smoke would not pierce the omnipresence of migrating sand.

This is getting easier. The bunny comes undone. Even the eerie warmth of the flesh – flesh that feels both soft and angled – is becoming familiar to my hands. I avoid my left ring finger this time – the last time being a forever again, had led to a long cut which still has the texture of a zipper from the Dr.'s stitches.

The Dr. talked about how the flesh feels in my hand which terrified me.

But then Petrichor was brought up again with a harmonious smile making my fear fade quick.

"The softness in our bodies is worked, and caressed by tendons and sinew which, under specific studying, mirror the images of constellations or tissues in plants. There used to be a saying when I was in med school: 'As so from within, is without.'"

Those moments would reveal again to me that we were all different before the Fall.

Just at that thought, the Knife did slip. An open-up on an organ occurred and that which was within Watership came undone into my...

And that was a screech that lights my blood orange.

And there is a scream of such lifelessness.

And I would come to know it as their own...then a swarm of them.

The Workers are here.

In my mouth,

in my nose,

in my eyes, with
blades and bullets, and
machinery for appendages
inside my father. Inside my
mother's tent.

The inertia of my speed caught up with me when I slammed through the door of the air containers.

Twinges of the spine and hallow sharp snaps collapsed over the sun-setting air. I felt it break me over its knee as kindling to the fires around: there is a momentous figure of a machine ripping its teeth through tents and the people in them like a claw from those arcade games you only ever won the stuffed animal you didn't want. There is a cacophony of figures murdering in such fervent waves I am sure there is a personal purpose behind each of them: how else does the face of the innocent turn to blood and sand in one, intentional wave.

The animal in me heard them come at the door.

I have 12 tanks in my bag – this was done sometime when I was hiding and listening and hoping to not hear. For the storage containers to work they had to be kept closest to the exposed north-west wall where wind, and air can exist unhindered.

Knock

Knock

They are at the door. Before I could slip the rest of me through the back lined with dismembered car doors, I sent automatic shots into the stores and blew

The

whole

Horrid

night into a ringing,

piercing

memory.

:|3|:
Gasping.

October///2017///Benny James

We were on our way downtown for a concert. You had bought us tickets in May. The leaves crossed the street in deep, dreamy gusts. When we got out of the car, you slipped your arm into mine. You were wearing this incredible dress; the wind calmed to a dance at your heels. We had met in the bright, fast pace of a ski season. When I moved here in 2015, I never thought about the blond hair, and gorgeous constructions of femininity hidden behind ski coats and street cars. I worked long, acidic nights at a bar to pay off the truck, and my lift ticket. I borrowed the gear from my roommate who went to the school on the Faultline and lashed together enough cash even for a haircut that would fit this smaller helmet. In the cascade of winter's love by way of snow-burn and long laughs about falling-- down, we fell in love.

When we got to the concert hall, the doors were locked.

The show was last week.

I write:

Rebby, a pet name that stemmed from this infernal lack of air in the early portions of the Fall, from Rebekka. Dr. Rebekka James-- we were married in the sun, one un-wavering August in the depths of trees and needle beds of Millcreek Canyon. The cottonwoods had shed a small lining of leaves and bark already, and I remember them like the insides of my childhood kitchen floor with 1970's printing on real wood.

It was probably even real cottonwood.

Then you became Reb- flatten to a syllable these last moments leading to your death.

2177 days with me Inside; bartering salt for air. What a metaphor:
 one even Frank Herbert or the early sand-script artists after it all
 entirely falls will use it again and again.

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 .
 .

And it goes.

*I exhale- measuring the softness and change in minuet pressure on my
 tongue of oxygen.*

.
 .

[3.1 PSI/ 1 by volume]

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 .

*If I can get the volume to 2 by tonight, I can sleep with as little as
 possible.*

*I inhale through my O-shaped mouth and hold it in-- I begin writing in
 distraction.*

Reb, you would know the name of this. It's a feeling that is
 ancient like blood cells formed from the primordial. My body
 urges me onward towards the bleak pinhole aspiration of a life
 ahead of me.

Despite my sorrow.

Despite my pain with its depths so profound I risk exposure to
 despair for.

The name would be a shape-sound that sought to extradite
 guttural meaning back into a sensationalized feeling.

Like the word nostalgia.

.
 .

*I write with the last pen I have since the air left. In
 the beginnings, when we still chanced sex and other
 things to keep our human nature intact: we would
 write each other letters. Still holding in:*

A crash of fixing stares to the ships of me...

*My breath betrays me and escapes my lungs.
 Arrested in coughing I try to hold more in.*

.

I inhale.

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Inhale sounds like in hell.

.

..

[3 PSI/1.4 by volume]

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I ex

hale

with

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The

Shape

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In

hale

and

Hold.

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...mories from before. Written in those letters, some of which I still have bound tight and rolled inside of this pen. Fixtures of phrases. Moments of your handwriting archived. I can see it in the mist of dust coming with the desert dusk: your face before the goggles were needed smiling and pushing a secret note into my palm. Back when we traveled with everyone. Those were the

traces of moments I felt small
 springs of relief.
I exhale.

[3PSI/ 1.9 by Volume]

Better.
Inhale.

Hold.

One note says:

“I know you don’t believe this is the end, not in the same way as everyone else. That an unwavering conviction to a humanity without peril will continue. It is an attractive thought: to know that there can be a way to live Inside without the fear of separation. To live with thoughts of separating from the human parts of us like intent or motive. To simply live, for you, is not enough.”

A fragile static of hypoxia climbs in me through my eyelids. And I burst out coughing the air from the machine.

[2.8 PS1/2.1 by Volume]

The loss of you is another agent effect of this new, new normal. The new normal of lack of air involved here as delivery from the times before.

Which become ancient, and hidden history.

To participate in this life – a new life of loss, and desolation – will be another deliverance away from that history.

A history of building a rail, an economic oppressive state, and driving people at one another or into the dessert.

A history of salt, air and sand.

I inhale and hold it all in.

Looking

At the

Writing,

It is all meaningless, but

Makes me miss you

Less

In the same way as those secret letters
 yet
 More
 In a whole
 new
 Way.
 .
 .
 .

: | | 3 | | : **After**

An exploration of eyes seeking hieroglyphs to the cave walls of my skull carve an apparatus of this decipher towards meaning.

Glistening sand crush their weight into the side of my tent tied in a crosshatch under my body's weight. The frayed portion of the knot is making this nibbling sound soft as the sunrise. When I see the rabbit, it is already running away from the waking movement of my neck.

This movement must be colossal to such a small body.

I had set the tent with its mouth open to the sun. Along the descent of sand walls, the tent's ochre and green stains become bushes and turns of sand along the desert floor.

I remember the conversation with my father about this specific striation of colors. How important it was to paint everything in it. It is interesting how something so small...well, it doesn't matter what difference it could have made.

The rabbit stops a length of rope away.

It pauses in its stare at me.

Curled up now, the tent's ropes untied and bound up back to the Belt, I stared back running my hands along the waves in the sand beginning to get up to temperature for the day.

These eroded points in the sand must have been baked to some new glass by the summer sun before the fall. They rip into me: even now when the mornings are full of just breezes, I see them in the cracks of my hands, in my eyes under the Goggles I slept without wearing out of the habit of being airtight sleeping in the shacks that were destroyed last night.

While the bunny stared at me, I went through my Pack in the lap of my crossed legs.

The bunny then turns and hops to nibble at some particulate that has flown in and stuck to a page fold of sand.

I nod and think: *It is important to do what is familiar.*

To think.

I count:

1.

. Fuchsia...

.

.

Fuchsia as a memory of morning light shining through your eyelids is the color of this feeling.

Is it a feeling?

Or merely a presence like a pause of a hand on your skin. Glowing in its pressure is also like a light: both new and distant yet present with its novelty.

.

Novelty as a curled splinter inside me.

.

. Derisive and impatient silence forms to push the memories of last night from their hiding.

The fuchsia molts to a putrescent gore of crimson. Slashes of murky flesh tones come into me; easy like mascara yet impossible like rinsing it from your tearstained cheeks.

.

2.

. Sand crushed and wind blistered: my feet, now in traumatic stress, feel the weight of each step when the Workers gave me chase. In this rotting red comes a well of black inarticulation: as my thoughts trap themselves on these words, I do not sense an origin for them.

. My hair feels burned by the intense glare of yesterday's moonlight – dyed in the ivory cremation of color from the darting of its light.

I remember the way the softness lit up the grey of shadows in the serene spotting of snow. I remember the sickening see-saw motion the sand made when I crashed through it in my foot falls or dodging: suspended in the sloshing of violence. I remember the breaths...

3.

...beating me to pieces. And another me leaving all that behind as I ran ...

. Rivers form cleaning the dirt from under my eyes-- *I wonder if the earth ever feels erosion as a waters carving--* clear out narrow passages of dirt on my face.

I see these new water-paths in the Goggles.

...from the workers. 2 of them: one caught my shoulder and when I was to be pulled to the ground, I happened to catch his throat with my hunting Knife and was showered in the surprise of moisture as the second rounded to me. I caught him in the underbelly with the point of the Rifle which found room for a bullet in his ribcage and those eyes in the dark cast such a...

. The bunny sprints in a release of sand from my cough.

Not even 4 I realize, once my air returns but still the water from those tears begin to turn white on my hands.

I have heard you can sell even this in the City.

To be a drop of water. To be burdened only by gravity and not...

I don't know what to do...this invokes the image of being bored. A state of being less or just not being, which is a temporal luxury unaffordable out here, or anywhere, anymore. That must be a thing no one thinks of when the buildings you walked past your whole life as a child are swallowed by a chasmic earthquake. When the air is seized by the powerful once the tectonic plate formed a fourth, and final wall of a mountain in the West to trap all the ominous pollution inside the city. When your backpack goes over the desk with your friends and into the chasm and you get through it all by climbing out to the mouth with fingers calloused from climbing practice. I had sat staring at the blood in my hands filling out the cracks in my nails and heard sirens, then soft screams, then nothing.

There it is again: that nibbling. The bunny must be back, and in that moment of unmoving, it reads my nonverbal acknowledgement and sprints away.

I should do something familiar.

I check my Pack while the sun begins to crest. In the force of the next 2 hours, I will have to move to some sort of shade.

In the Pack is the Notebook I was writing in when the earthquake swallowed everything else.

Geology

It says on the cover in my handwriting. In it are two ripped pages from somewhere else. Letters I had never noticed. They are all in my mother's handwriting:

4/5/2017.

To Alina-

It was the intentionality I found in you one morning when you were 12 in the training academy that stuck with me. An arrest of meaning: like this constant abrasion of sand and wind on me. It holds its own meaning in that way. To erode and burgeon a new form of life in this place so dear to me but so completely dead. What a marvelous adaptation we have when our feelings are so close to being reckoned.

When you were tiny, I would catch you staring into the street. I would have to put ointment and lotion on your eyelids because they were raw from being open so long. Before you even formed your first word (which was "where") there was a grandeur of intensity locked away in your little face.

You always seemed to be searching for something. A new meaning or way to survive the erosion you feel like would pick you up and put you towards your challenge of outlasting the other twigs, rocks and debris to become the one that sees the shifts in sand to glass and wear the wind of age and movement as the sandstone does in lines of auburn and grey.

You will always be looking for your "where."

These afternoons I just cry and sell that salt I chip away with my fingernails.

[2.3 PSI/2 by volume]

Here, under Fairpark station, in a trembling exhaustion, I seem to just be thinking as a distraction when I see a person walk in the bottom, and arrive at the top at the Structures Spire, with another person leave and come out the bottom.

It could be worse, well, the air, well, MY air could be worse.

They are wearing the uniform: an augmentation of the police uniform with the logo clad to their right shoulders.

Three spires, the one in the center raised. These Workers were everywhere by the summer of 2020. Collecting data from the BetterBreaths that keep me, and all these shades of human beings, alive now. Pursuing hired tasks for the engineers of the trains; some, even joined the militant forces of the Police. This would become their majority when the Faultline ruptured revealing its ancient secret:

Salt.

Salt in measure unlike the Lake.

Salt in the kind of quality we as humans can't think of: trillions of striking stars

Utterly, uncountable, unimaginable amounts of salt of the earth.

Our solitaire mother had been split open, giving us salt to feed the meter for air at the BetterBreath stations. Cauterizing us with the oldest natural cure to age and rot.

[1.7 PSI/ 1.7 by Volume]

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I had been breathing freely I realize, in those memories which fill me with primal unrest. A crushing weight of loss in search for some...

...soft...

Moment anywhere at all.

On my shoulders, in the warm center of my belly, is your blood.

2 days ago, it looked brilliant and bold.

*And now, it's rusted way to the corrosive orange everything turns in
this City.*

*I was left alone with those pages once more. Your journals in the blue
legal pads of the lab near the foothills where I would take the train and
we would eat lunch by the river. I would fill the back pages and inside
covers with poems.*

Now, I am alone with those.

*And these letters – grafted to the inside of my palms. These letters from
the early days.*

And this child of grief, which is always hungry and always crying.

You

June of 2021:

It's March, I think. Though when we walk, I focus on the pressure of my footsteps in the sand or your shoulders hidden strength under the heaviest pack. Next to Alina's. I imagine the lavender blossoms in the hills behind our house. I see myself putting those sandy scented flowers into your layers of blond hair to find in the sheets of the bed later. Pressed as an old tradition of drying flowers but with an intentionality only that moment held together can know.

As requested, the new thing this week I am grateful for is that we decided to no longer include language about the ____ of summer in our limited conversations. It has made the pressure of explanation to fill bloated silences balloon away from me.

As if I can "breathe" easier even.

When we spoke last night with everyone—checked the pulse as you say—I did feel a little better. It is with a rich profusion of sorrow I admit that a large part of that is because the patient in our care finally did die.

The consumption of the last few weeks of paying attention to the illness, defeatedness, and despair of an intimate death within our party was a great cause of concern. I didn't sleep well—my dreams filled with ways of sealing new wounds, or repetitive sequences

of the words you spoke in advice on how to hold their head. There was an entire night where my brain substituted rest with the phrase “hypoxic dilution of blood” being said in your voice in varying tones each minute of each hour. Then the squint of stars focusing in on me through the smog turned to pillars of destructive missiles again, and my heart left me for a panic attack. And the phrase was replaced with some early words from the fall:

“Routine maintenance of public interests.”

We placed the patient under one of those panoptic bridges, and left leaves to cover them which I am sure the wind has reclaimed by now.

-Me

[2.1 PSI/2.1 by volume]

“I am grateful you kept these...” I say without hearing my voice.

*Or knowing I was saying anything: the pressure of being heard when
you speak can cave in the momentary value of words.*

Crushing them a whisper – but these I still spoke aloud.

For these I write – that pens ink or lack thereof a stain I chase away:

I think of the moon often. Its sunken beauty a dull tipped edge against nights made more bladed by the streaks of comets and falling of stars. This is a metaphor of course: these comets and stars are of our own making. Just like the God that holds us separate from ourselves. And just like the fabricated night; the one of disillusionment.

These borrowed habits from inability to form words seem dead. A real dead which feels nearly as if they did not really exist, only persist in that same way all things do when you continue to do them.

I think of teaching you to paint, of course, here. Your lithe and perfect fingers instinctually holding a paintbrush with the pointed pressure. A brushstroke of seeing you do surgery for the first time coating me in amber hues of memory.

Then your words: “Is there a right way?”

Those words full of your raised eyebrows, and flecks of light on your checks. I had stared because you rarely asked me such things, and I saw

it in your other hand you were unsure: such a rare part of you to see I smiled deeply to reassure you.

A thing your smile had always been for.

And it goes.

I am grateful you kept all of this. In my hand now is that album of pages hand bound. Sand pierces its pages and tucks itself in. I turn to where this sand has embedded itself to wake them. The paper is left abrasive in texture.

On the page is a draft of a letter:

----->Dr. James/UofU National Lab of
Civil and Environmental Engineering Laboratory.

April 2020

Wednesday: 8th: BPI Today: 97.4----->

I, Doctor Rebekka Candace Whitaker-James, am following up on the submission of my research titled *Pollution, Hypoxia, and the Economy of Air-warfare* for the Fall's edition of the Scientific Journal, to have this letter included in its publication. The research was conducted in conjunction with the resources of the National Land Management Bureau, University of Utah, Westminster Environmental Humanitarianism Department, and work of several select scientists from the development of the Inland Port in the North-Western Quadrant of Salt Lake City proper of who have requested to be anonymous.

In a gesture of respect and identification of the assemblage of agents at play outside of the formed body of research, the work of Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* comes to mind here. As scientists come back to this cataclysmic social injustice (if they, we, exist then), without doubt her work on an "agent presence of vibration between the power grids and the neighborhoods must be treated as members of that neighborhoods themselves since they impact a holistic examination of that space through socio-political gerrymandering and economic value" must be included in what will be a very corroded and survey of history at this point.

The quality of impact my work and its immersion has had on me as an academic—defining that word as a member of the pillar of education and preservation of the tradition of science—is insurmountable. I wanted to take the time to write this into your system, UoU Lab of CEE, so that there is official documentation of my

resignation if the board above you (us) dismiss my research as they had the following bodies of work before mine:

The Racist Economization of Air by Dr. _____

The Implications of Neoliberal Infiltration by _____

Caverns of Dissent: A Mixed Analysis of the Crevasses Created During Construction of the Inland Port by Dr. _____

A Weapon of Mass Disillusionment; The Governance of the MLM 'Herba Life's' Newest Marketing Trend by _____ M. D

The Great Resurrection of Organized Crime by _____ LSMC

I impatiently await your approval of my submission as does the shifting tectonic plate under your feet and the cough of bursting lungs in newborns.

----->Dr. James. Stamped at: 00:17 9th of April 2020

I remember the night you wrote this well.

You got home late.

I was still painting upstairs.

We had that beautiful staircase we built together over several snow days that led in a tight spiral from our closet to the attic with such immaculate light I used to sit up there to take pictures of wood, leaves, and dirty rocks to use as textures and colors for my designs. Our time together – rather us together was truly solidified into simile by our unity of navigating the rubble, wood, and plastic before finishing the stairs.

I heard your weight on that ladder in the middle of the song "Muse" by Nicolas Jar.

It was 1:30 AM.

From the west, a whip of salt slaps at the corner of the wall I am sunk into. Granules of sand bleed in when it turns the corner away from me.

And a train in the distance pulses past.

[1 PSI/4 by volume]

*You turned the light down after speaking my name softly. I had called
you around 10 asking what you would like to do. Now that the
research was finished.*

How I could help you celebrate.

*You answered the phone, thanked me for calling, and hung up after
saying you loved me "persistently."*

How strange to tie those memories back into my frayed life now.

*How strange to remember them, the song, the light, the smell of
turpentine wrapping its arms around the hung silences we shared
there.*

*How strange to miss you like those particular moments: in this soft,
punctured way of thought. In this mundane process of thought in
general.*

*It frays as you pay it less and less attention over the time taken
differently.*

And the wind in an echo of the train's rasping shrill gasps:

And it goes.

:| |4| |: Where

May 30th, 2012

Mrs. Dannen

4th Grade English

On May 20th me and my parents went to see the e clips. It made me feel small. The shapes it made were like toenail clippings, and the ground was darker when it was not supposed to. The bugs made lots of noise. My glasses did not fit so I looked without them but

my parents said not to. My eyes still hurt. The drive was very, very, very long. I read A Separate Peace by John Knowles so you would be happy I did. My dad stopped the car to talk to people. They were rangers he said, and they told us about the trees the rocks and the animals. Dad told me for a long long time about how to always talk to rangers or authorities when I need help. When he talked I thought about clouds because I wanted it to rain so we could go home.

I am happy I could see the e clips; it was very nice to see how it changed the forest. I want to be in the forrest when I get old, but not be an authority. I think that would be boring to stand and talk to people all day. My favorite part was being awake while my parent's slept in the tent at night. I could hear animals and the wind. And it made me feel small like the e clips but also like being in bed at home.

I would like to go back soon.

I don't know why you kept this essay, or how it found its way in the notebook but...I remember that day under the eclipse.

The gauges of the extra tanks clank at my side. After a check, a miracle has kept all 5 in working condition.

After, it was an even, cool evening and we cooked trout in tinfoil around the fire. I shivered so hard that we had to get the tarp from the car to wrap around me prompting a joke that I was wrapped like the trout too.

What a tremendous amount of weight, a symbolic stone to have all – to need – all this air hitched to my belt.

I remember not talking to my father after that for the night.

It is noon here, and the glare of sun is cooking me. It sinks in an oblong weight on my back: as if my Pack is filled with a metallic liquid that sloshes and teeters with the BetterBreath cannisters. An induction, I find in me, to parabolic shifts with me here:

Air v. Heat

Water v. Desert

Me v.

But the essay did hold one thing in its place.

This Ranger Station has long been here.

From these long yards, I am convinced some other animal out here has also found refuge.

I take out the Scope, careful to keep both ends covered with my hands.

As a father, you would say below climbing routes as a prayer,

“I am here to see what you have yet to. I am here to feel the rope, feel the space between your feet and your earth. I am here. “

And about the lens, later, you would tell me that in a landscape of such plainness anything that glimmers will be the quickest thing seen. In those early days. Around the small fire you would make just for me and you after everyone would go to sleep: you would open the case and take the rifle out. My hands would get cold quick touching it and removing the two pins to feel it release into two parts. You would make me do it faster and faster till the pinches and small bruises the machine gave me would turn to the callouses they are now. You said being a father is about making me prepared.

Then you handed me the scope one night a month or so ago saying:

“This is your eyes for everywhere. How you see – what you see-- are conditional on where you are: you can decide that.”

Spheres of moisture form on my hand and fall in patient weight to the sand below. Crying has become the most normal reaction to remembering lately.

I prop open the Jacket on the edges of the Poles running through the frame of the Pack to provide a rock like shell of shade near a bushel of sand and sagebrush.

I pick a lavender-toned flower from the sand-resilient bush and place it in my teeth. *The bitter hues ease into me – sinking as a slow sleep finds you.* Chewing, I clip the Scope to the top of the Rifle.

Along the bottom I feel the Feather I found embedded into the sand when we first found the great crevasse to fulfill our search for home. The same crevasses which cradle your wind-rocked bodies now.

“It is an eagle’s flight feather” You said.

I use it to find the winds shape. It catches now with an intentional blade, slicing an attenuated amount of air from the passing wind.

Next to it, the Stone with a hole I tied there. The Stone, flat and remarkably round, was my “worry stone” from middle school. You, mother, had given it to me, saying:

“It’s a mother’s responsibility to make sure you are always protected from your worries.”

I use it as a place marker for where my right hand goes on the Rifle’s body – so I can quickly know my balance of weight.

I think all these things to push against the salty tears coming again.

I see them fog the Goggles, and so I take them off slowly, and pull up the Bandana above my nose. The heat in my breath evaporates them slowly.

12 and 3 quarters, the sun says between my hands.

I pull the bolt back, and check: there is a round. I slide it shut, and that sound rips away the soft quietness in the sand, in my arms, and in my thoughts. Holding my hand over the outlooking Scope, the Rifle levels against my prone arm towards the Station.

A familiar – yet faint, having been reawakened from the time since that night – feeling returns wrapping my ribs with hooks of anxiety. I slowly move the sand in mounds around the Scope. It tastes of copper agony and the blood mist perfuming my body when I shot the Worker. My hands shakes and some sand falls to the scope, and I sculp the mounds to the bottom of its lens lightly so a third of it is a quarter moon of imperceptibility. Crawling across me, my air flashes signs of warning. Signs of attack on the process of being. I check my pulse.

.....

I breathe in... ..

from a needle in my throat;

from an artery of artificiality;

from a BetterBreath at my side and the bpm drops from 114 to 77 in

slow

stairways

of minutes.

My air re-mutes its signs of panic and halts the attack.

I keep breathing, returning the cannister to my belt.

.....

There is a surrealistic pressure that comes on the back of a panic attack. An echo specifically summoned by the newly vacant halls of occupancy. Where the carved at ribs were, are now the breathing limbs of scare tissue and oncoming PTSD.

The breath comes full and poignant. In the lens, across the yards of sand, the Station sits in a slumping structure. *And the breathing is steady.* And the Scope rests into me.

I do the count.

1.

. I blink, then hold my eyes shut.

.

. I open them to the scene of sand and sun: against the west facing wall all the shadows of the roof, the small porch, and lines of pillars stand tall against them. An American flag beats itself to tatters in the wind.

2. *I hold my breath.* And curve my fingers to inch towards the window of the station. A spring of sinew curls along my side to meet the index fingers pressure.

. Something soft and polished gleams inside...

.

.... no its on the other side of the station. I stretch the connection of atoms in me into the Rifle.

.

My eyes narrow so the brimming cones of light come to a point.

3.

. it is a car's bumper. The vehicle sits on the opposite side of the Station, facing North. From here I can see its shadow and the light cast a glossy mirage through a window on to the sand.

.

. It must be a Worker, no one else could be out here alone.

4. A door closes, that sand: that silence, shatters with the mechanical bellow snapping me into remembering I haven't suppressed the Barrel. *Me, the bunny, whipping sand from its back legs into the fury of safety of distance.*

.

I fill my right hand with its tubular shape and listen to the seconds of twisting it to place staring through the Scope as a figure emerges in front.

. *The Grid will make this necessary: My mind fills the silence with this rehearsed thought about the rivulet of streets in the city.*

.

Those boxes of blocks which made it easy to get anywhere. Those streets barren in the auspicious way only being stripped of trees can be. Lines of trenches like those from perennial wars; burned down trees by the combustion of invalid oxygen. An oxymoron of function: trees burned by oxygen.

.

5. Another figure follows, and they reach for the door. *I see here – in this vacating moment of omnipresent – the arm badge of the man in front.*

.

The Grid will be filled with them.

.

. I hold my breath...

And the hum of humanity pitter-patters from chest to legs.

.

...and time the shot with its down beat.

. *The sound slips from the Rifle as a ping: searching for the recorded answer of some other user on that atomic frequency.*

A nail snatching at wear skin of soldiers.

A bolt of lightning through a tree.

A nail posting a political poster to a phone post.

And it goes. My mind, finding snags of meaning from the writhing moments of thoughts.

.

Thoughts fill me naturally. As if I shot bunnies and humans my entire life.

And an answer comes from the concave of that Worker's jaw.

6. The first falls away from me with the waves of shock and communication pinging back out to the desert. The second, turns quickly from the door to lean over the fallen Worker. In a few moments, they stand up:

I breathe out.

Then hold for the thud:

. This second pinging feels heavier and more desperate for an answer: so, it finds itself in the heart of this man. In the metaphorical center of responsivity. In me I sense its purpose and then...

And then...

The purpose of ending.

. He falls with a crushing shot through his chest.

.

.

.

7.

My lungs are trapezing with the freedom of great, vibrant blood in gaping open capillaries, a forest ablaze by onrushing air.

.

.

.

Holding my breath always reminds me of staring at the sky –

I see the same sky as the trees did when their roots ripped up from the iron. When their crowded plumage bellowed to smoke and fire. When the pristine air was castigated by the answers of how nothing ever stays.

My air comes to a ringing halt. I bite back the cough.

And the thoughts flow through me: would I have been this pensive if I were another 19-year-old in another year? In 2010? 2000?

.

And it goes.

7 and three quarters is remarkable.

Where there is less air, there is much more of much more: more figures with more frequent attention to the walls and the structures of towers holding each piece together. More time or really the peels or vessel walls of what time could be to explain. A thought comes: are these events just decoration for the onrush of an end?

And the dust from the Scope settles, returning to its ancient place alongside all other sand.

And through the Scope I remain watching those who were shot become bodies lost to time in the background.

:|5|: Here

March///2019///Journal Entry 2///Dr. Rebekka James

I had been working insistently for 6 weeks.

I needed to get out to the salt flats, but you showed up at the office with the truck we rarely drive and said you needed me to leave early.

We were at the trail by 5.

The tent up by 6.

Asleep by 1AM.

I remember laying there thinking about what I would write here to explain, or process, all the things I couldn't talk to you about and do or say or feel when we were kept up by the grand echoing calm of the canyon. The coyotes, strange to be in a pack in this part of the country, yowled and turned their hearts to the moon in search of that

great answer which they were promised by being included in the myths of the Goshute Indians.

You had turned and said: “I know you are tired. I know you think I expect you not to be or that I want more, in some “matrimonial” way. I know that by me saying this – me knowing what you know – makes me uncomfortable because it is usually you that does the knowing for the two of us. You know why the earth stays in the sky, how the sand’s ph balance impacts the flora growth in the spring, and even how to literally mend a broken heart. I am going to tell you something you don’t always know however: when you are at work, writing, researching, editing, doing smart science-y things (you smiled at our inside joke I made on our first date which we use to describe my occupation to anyone who asks us now – I remember I smiled too.) Or when you get home late and leave early without breakfast, or when you don’t call or text, or when you only see me when I come to see you at the office. In all of this I love you. I love you not only in that matrimonial way, but in a way without description. The way I, as someone who does creative, drawe-y things (The other half of the joke), has been searching for the colors for all my life.

We had embraced, and you turned over and pretended to go to sleep. You even knew that I needed that small space to process. Now, in the morning, the layers of sand seem soft cushioned by the new sun. You are making coffee in a pot and the wide swell of the landscape makes me feel like a little girl, and everything is beautiful – fleeting and asphyxiating – yet beautiful.

And it goes.

There it is again.

[-- PSI/1 by volume]

Thin lines of hypoxia, why must you hold so tight?

It is that magical hour between 3 and 4 am. I don’t know, but I can feel it because of how all these apathetic shapes bend around pillars of shadow for a position of bearable discomfort in their own hypoxia.

I am saltless and the Chasm is far away. I too, must hold to that which you seek. A child of air; air the child of breath; hypoxia the god of...

I hold my breath and take off my goggles.

·
·

The night oscillates its shutter lenses from bleak to back to the void to target me as one who stares back.

·

And through it, a slip of a body’s shape stirs and falls off the road.

And I am in a dead sprint to catch it before it falls from the bridge,
rip the patch from it, and let it find the bottom.

*Slowly, I find my mind still easing that needle of cation into the veins of
my hands as they patch the oxygen of that fallen shape. Slowly the
patch...*

*.Fuck
Fuck....*

The small flame was birthed in a single moment of its release. I
was able to catch it with the dull end of my moist bandana in time
but it burned a
LOT
Of air.

The patch gets into the groove.

[3 PSI/1 by Volume]

*They had too much to still be alive with. This was actually more than full
that's why there was a flame. This reminds me...*

I shuffle the book from my back, setting into the small edge of the
bridge, out of sight of the great void. Fold back in the journal
entry I read before I passed out briefly in the arms of hypoxia.

I hope...

Yes.

*We had found this when we were still a part of that first group; the one
that left with the family from our neighborhood. We were in line
sometime later for rations when there still was some from the Workers.*

Before they went in search of more chasms from the Faultline.

More Salt.

*It was trotted under-foot while in line. It should show where this
Structure is.*

COMING SOON:

In conjunction with the Herbalife, the University of Utah's Foundation of Funding for Economic Prosperity, Salt Lake Department of Commerce presents the Inland Port's Expansion.

Detailing 4 points of structure across the valley to unify the transportation of worldly goods from the Port into your farmer's markets and to your homes, the railway expansion is a feat of engineering genius that will put Salt Lake City at the center of economic commerce, and trade.

Engage now by applying for jobs on the rail or talking to your employers about how to get involved.

We will see you on the rail!

This is where they wait for salt to fall: from those "4 points of structure" across the valley.

In line, with these pamphlets in many hands, young Alina had begun asking me about foreshadowing.

Fall from the rails of this transit system all the money from the companies and the state went into. With the promise of incredible financial gain.

As a gliding of knife into flesh, the thoughts of the old book came to mind which I had recited a line from it for her:

"And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked:

And I will make the land wasted, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers."

then began monotonously discussing its importance to the canon of science fiction.

Where the work began.

As if any of that education was relevant to survival now. Foreboding stories, warnings, and other ideas of systematic failure are simply the arm of a tourniquet. We must learn to use it properly to not be maimed.

More were hired through calls for work posted in specific locations, and immediately (literally within a month) the train had a rail built to the

*great chasm of the Faultline and they transported salt in tons to the
Inland Port to sell to what we were told was a world wanting.*

Here, Rebekka winked at me.

*Gifted with foresight, a thing which leaders of dystopias are often
criticized for lacking, they seemed to designate a large amount of the
newly hired (those whose' homes were un-swallowed like their work) to
guarding the sacred salt mine.*

Like the mine near Temple Square where you...

I am stopped with an unfamiliar weight of awareness here,
perhaps coming from the gift of more air. The aura of grief which
is your loss hangs more loosely.

And though I wait to cry, it doesn't come anymore.
*Dehydration, or something more symbolic perhaps, I find myself
thinking this surreal and normal thought.*

I find the water bottle, and drink with the water only filling the
front of my mouth.

*I remember that day in the sun at Alina's match. She was 6; and I asked
her what she was doing. It was half time and she had run directly to her
water bottle and took the sort of intentional sip only children mind's can
measure.*

*She held it there with her cheeks ballooning some for some time, then
turned her head back and swallowed with a nod.*

She had said:

"Drinking- it feels fuller this way."

*Then she ran back to the pitch even though the second half hadn't started
to practice running with the ball.*

The silence in the streets snags on the turn of each abrupt corner.
The Grid, as so many came to call it even before the earthquake,
stands impermeable: etched into the earth as a new curve of
muscle does when you carry such weight as this city of salt, and
decay for so long.

*Let us put something in writing while there is light (and there it is
again, the light. The flame: the solder holding a world of language from
me to a page. This precipice of writing as a birth of...)*

...

Drenched in the caked weight of paint, I had walked through the bedroom to get to the bathroom. Thinking you were asleep; I left the door mostly closed (you had always said an entirely closed door always woke you up.) My cartoon image in the round mirror was taking its skin off in shades of putrid blues and pristine ivories, and then I submerged my face in my hands feeling the sunbaked sting of sweat pool in my eyes and then...

...a soft

...pressure on the small of my back. I was in far enough into the water of my palms to drown.

...and your kisses came like surgery on the membrane of a cell wall...

...on my neck

...on my ears and all of me.

The tearing of the sun shows me the baking of thin water vapor.

My bodies water, a tense balance of loosing and taking, undergoes this change.

Chemically torn from me baked, usually over severe lengths of time, into crystals.

The good memories are the hardest...

That morning, or another one like it, we had woken to the sun's sleepy blinks through the grape vines. You were required to speak downtown.

Another protest.

...

Across the bridge these bodies- like mine in many ways, and unlike me in ways I can never know- shift. Sand sprayed on to sweat becoming salt becoming motion towards the salt mines to slog out some more hours being sprayed onto a hot road.

Below me- either here or at that bridge that walking across felt the same as this one or...that one- is that mosaic about accommodating spaces where violence is the ecosystem with art.

There is something old, and new here: me thinking critically.

[2.7 PSI/ 1.2 by Volume]

I haven't had the air to for that some time...

My left thumb was alive with instinct looking for the ring on its neighbor finger. I take off my gloves, and see it is still there- glued to me by grime and the time I didn't think about it which was all of it till now.

Your ring above mine- the two bands marking me. If I was a snake, the gold on green (you wanted oxidized copper,) I wonder if these would make be venomous, of just costuming as for caution.

I had been staring, and seeing through the filter of salted tears and my glasses...

...and in taking them off more noise crusts awake. Lesions leisurely snap and I see another beautiful oxidation.

Blood, brown as rust- turned to the orange of kitchen lights on linoleum at 5am- on the iron density of the earths hold in sand on me. This water paints my fingertips and I see it on those rings and the pools of it in my crevasses on my palms.

I hold the blood in my fists and peer out from eyes without glasses into the unfiltered mix of bodies and space.

...

At the protest, you were speaking in the bed of a truck with the letters ACAB painted in yellow along the side. I was sitting, holding your backpack in my crossed legged lap in the June heat. You were wearing black pants and the black crop top I had screen-printed a yarrow onto the collarbones of. I was wearing running shoes, and all black and was just thinking about double checking your bag of medicine, tourniquets and bandages when another truck this one black and with the letters "Protest Plow"

Ripped

Through

The crowd

An inch

From me.

And the people who were once there became undone

Into pools of different colors

Some red, some black, some were even white from the teeth and bones
 that had cracked and splintered under the ton of steel and
 Combustion.

The unstoppable truck drove on blaring “Rockin’ in the Free World,” and
 I remember swearing to myself in shock then that I would always see
 two things in my mind when remembering this memory:

1. That Neil Diamond must never have dreamed of this happening.
2. That I was like those pools only the chemicals in me were still solid
 and my water was not yet muddled to the fluids of a body undone.

...

I remember trying to write about this and never doing it.

*I remember you moving rapidly, like a knife through tension, to the
 bodies.*

I remember meeting you there, and you saying

*“Don’t speak you don’t have to: this isn’t something you should be used
 to speaking about. Now, lets do what can be done.”*

*I remember you holding my head in between your hands watching my
 eyes and waiting for them to pool but they never did.*

I think because I was nodding.

*I think because everyone was everywhere all at once, and that I knew we
 had to become one.*

*Because the people were screaming and call the police and no one else
 was coming and in that swollen burst of moments my mind became
 focused on yours.*

I remember thinking nothing but saying:

“Thank you; I love you. What’s next?”

*And you took the bag and picked up someone’s head and I held their neck
 with my hands and the day became night quickly without any sirens and
 only the slow seeping sound of people becoming bodies in our hands.*

Now, there are still bodies.

Now, I am still thinking of that what next.

And that long memory has led me to the setting sun over the walls of mountains and watching buildings. I see the sunlight paint with easy brushing waves across this grid. Those bodies continue to writhe; torn from slumber or systems of being. A shuffle of direction having overtaken movement; an organized dropping of objects being performed instead of holding onto anything. Nothing belongs; belongings become objects in the same way that the Earth's spiritual largess leaves you when you leave the life from your body.

Ochre flourishing fabric rips into an unmoored moaning maroon.

" Did you ever wonder why we had to run for shelter when the Promise of a brave new world unfurled beneath a clear blue Sky?"

Another quote from another warning; another artifact of caution casting its shadow of death forward from us from the same decade as Dune.

"CUGHAHGgah...h.h.hgg"

I had been coughing, not remembering. I had been holding my breath for some amount of time.

How similar to that memory of myself buried in the blood of those bodies. I held my breath then also to hear pulses or your words with unfiltered noise.

And breathing does come back, and this time my life stays moored to my body. The vessel goes. Time stays.

And Air comes.

[2.4 PSI/ 1 by Volume]

More than enough.

"What's next?" I say aloud and think about how I have been always thinking about that as a monologue in the self.

In my bag, I try to find an answer from you and only find another letter, this one rolled tight into the side of a spiral notebook.
I set to reading it under the ambiance of a dying day.

Letter back to You in September 29th, 2020:

When I told you I didn't know, I saw that fear in you. This substantial, new fear I had been feeling in a concussive panic for 18 months. Ever since I first went to the Great Salt Lake after getting my PhD: I was met at the end of the road and the old scientist, remember I told you about him? How his hat was coated with so much salt there was dried blood from it living atop his head on the rim? He said something that made me feel that fear.

That fueled my research.

We were out on the lake now, and he reached his hand into it and returned it with a cup of water. But once out of its body, the water and its signature pink had turned a putrid red. Copper he said. From the mine, and outrageous pollution from the air as well.

This was the summer of 2018.

I bring this up, because it is the only way I can relate to that fear I see in you. Luckily, I had woken up late for work and you were in the garden when the fault gave. I fell from the bed through the floor and remarkably, seeing we lived literally on top of it, stopped falling once the ground stopped parting in the living room. Our house was one of the first built with the anti-earthquake foundations, and to see the entire horizon give way to the earth's terrible maw, and see you see me in the house through shaking breaking windows, was a new horror. A system of newly planted fear to burgeon a garden of felling, being, and describing that fear.

The fear I felt with the old man on the lake, and when you nearly didn't make it into the house, is how I can say: I know what you feel.

The city is turning more and more black as people's houses, businesses, and streetlights go out. The uncertain permeation of paranoia that creeps into our bed at night is an unprecedented one: and as we wait, there must be decisions made, this too is a new fear.

But I digress: this is a love letter to you.

To your ability to use words better than me; to you who edited all my dissertations—even the one on surgical extraction of tumors-- with amazing detail. And so, while we are still here at home, with the small family whose daughter grew up across the street: who you taught to draw with chalk in the summers on the rain gutters, and I patched her head when she rode her bike through the curb and over the car, we are together. How she is the child of all of us now (which she would hate to be called as they always do). All of us. But without you, if you had followed the squash and chicken wire into that chasm out front, we would not be whole.

I would be but among the dead organisms in the now copper lake.

-Rebbeka

I remember the conversation I had with you after this letter: before the air completely gave out and we, the five of us, had to move on to find those respirators in the city. You said:

"I tried a tie-in; did that make it better?"

And I cried and said, it was already good.

And yes, that made it better.

The sunset finally bleeds out over the buildings. A deep darkness folds over us, the figures of bleak life finding ways to stay afloat.

But I feel it.

That feeling you sewed into your details of the life before. I feel it in the death of who passed over that bridge to give me life now. In the death of the patient we took on: who died of an illness that without tubes and people inside of you consumes you entirely. I see this body still, next to that bridge, when I close my eyes.

A shape turns to a body in the mid-distance to hunch over the side of the bridge. In this light, every shape looks like its looking at you: the gape of where maybe its mouth is turns to me. I am reminded again of my father. This time about him later in life.

Visiting him at the end of a long, weathered road in Logan.

Dementia torn he would ask if I was the post office each time.

I see him watering his flowers, waving, telling me about the war he lived through, about his family who doesn't come anymore. Asking about where my kids were. Me saying I didn't have any and his glassed eyes blinking back then saying:

"And it goes."

The sun settles in for the night, and I am warmed by the weight of
memory.

And there it is again: from the catacombs of my despair and grief.

There it is from your letters and into me.

Not hope exactly: but maybe hope wearing black for a funeral.

: | | 6 | | : **Here it Comes**

Static, in ways that only blood can taste, twinkle from my sleeping elbows.

The evening falls from the sky and sinks in like a bleeding organ into the rocks and steep cliffs here in Midwest Utah.

Alit by hypoxia, my forearms pulse with a near purple pain.

Out, much further to the west, is a glassy expanse of permeating pinks. The Lake's dead water reflects a sunset. In the water, the murky conglomeration of cells and debris called "water," the sunset will die of age, and be preserved into obsidian night by the salt. Like the eye of a trapped seagull in its wake.

My fingers, an apex of feeling, are storm clouds of evaporation.

And, also, how peculiar (maybe that is the word for it) to witness something as normal as an everyday setting of the sun in these times of severity.

I can't feel my pelvis, nor the muscles that round out its shape from laying in prone, anymore.

The shade of the station has followed the casted light of the sun as the world, and me and those bodies in the desert of so many bodies of sand and other animals, close in on completing another routine trip around it.

And there it is, that constant sound I couldn't find till now: the shuttering in between my ribs' marrow and me.

The sand sinks and swirls in the vibration of heats and my friction and sand is, after all, an entire sea of dead and shaped things.

My eyes, even from alternating turns in the scope, both see everything in tunneled focus, and they burn, oh god they burn. Staring into a lens in the middle of the sun couldn't have been a nice thing to do to them.

Nothing has moved beside the sun: even the wind with its tumbleweeds, and the bunnies out here had stayed away from the station's shade. From the bodies there.

I had watched and listened for any commotion from any direction, and now, as the bleeding light turns to those grand purples and spotting of clean blue, there is nothing left but to go see for ourselves.

Slowly, as that travelling tree must feel when it slides and transitions to new portions of its roots, my left knee relaxes and spreads my muscles back out.

The very sinew seems resistant to gaining motion again.

My neck relaxes.

I stretch out; in habit I balance my nose one final time with the tip pendulated on the sand.

.
.

I hold my breath allowing for my body to wake.

.
.
.

When I was a small, the Dr. would come over early in the morning every Sunday.

My mom and dad would joke that they were "happy to be rid of me for a while," holding on to each other as we left to the backyard.

.

I exhale and small scurries of dust fly forwards on my air. Inhaling I lift my lower back parallel with my shoulder blades and push my calves back. The turning metal and spaces in the BetterBreaths whine at my side against the metal Carabiners, Tent Poles and Knife.

.

She would lead me through meditative breathing from the practice of mindfulness: talking with a voice of such even splendor it made me feel both safe and floating. I remember thinking how strange it would feel to be floating in such a great body of water but to not be afraid.

.

. I told her this once, and she smiled that full smile that made her eyes squint as if she was focusing on remembering some specific detail to put in her research, and laughed softly. She said here to focus. Focus on a point and breathe through it. Through this practice that feeling will be your balance.

.

.

I exhale, and my calves fold under my reinforced pelvis and hip.

My palms leave the Rifle in front of me watching the sun set in the east: where the Mountains and the Grid live. They find their home in the folds of my hips and my toes in my Boots spread to sink into the dust. I feel my chin instinctively raise level with that

talked about point. I inhale, feeling my chest squirm for release from the thick, tight bindings of clothes.

.
.

Once, after this meditation, and after yoga, and when we both sat outside on the grass and it must have been spring because there were plump bees flying flower to flower, dragging my attention to them when she took my hand. The Dr. didn't say anything, but I felt that floating sensation and exactly at the point she sent some small pressure into my hand and breathed in. I breathed in. We held together and exhaled. That smile returned and we watched the flowers converse with the bees before going back inside.

The next day, The Dr.'s Bandana was on our kitchen table for me with a note that said:

Alina-

I told Benny about yesterday.

And he said it is important to reinforce those moments of holistic growth with something tangible—some gift—so they can be associated to as real once they are over. I am bad at gifts, but here is this. I have had it since I was your age. I think I got it in girl scouts?

Love, Rebekka.

. I exhale and all the horrid, convoluted tension in my spine syphons out. My center, inches from my belly button and the curve of my quads, comes to a full weight holding the trouble above in the lungs, the heart, and the head in stride. I pick up the Rifle, take off the Scope and wrap it in the Bandana. The one that lives tied around my neck: it had small marionberries printed on it at one point, but they have all turned to jam by time and use.

.

The count is still around 6, and before the sun goes down, I glide down the sand dune with the Rifle held to me. My body glides along like those roots of...that tree (*what was it called?*) towards the structure. Two buzzards glide closer, as I come to ten feet away.

I level the Rifle and step with the intensity of not being seen by the souls of the bodies.

The sky is carved of light now – a coating of amber hue. A sepia tone to draw the blinds on the day. Splitting as a curve of atoms to an ax through wood.

The bodies stay put of course.

. *In these bodies pools a reflection of what my...*

I close in to be able to touch and all at once everything in me is told to turn towards the door as another figure emerges.

Another

Figure standing with arms and

Hands to its.

Side.

An icy hailstorm descends from a voice to snap off the silence:

“I waited for...” The figure

shatters at that sentence caught by my rifle’s bullet.

Crisp-crunching noise devoid of thought and a clicking leaves the clip open. Where do such thoughts come from?

I was on top of the new figure with the Knife before anything could hold any time for me, however.

“You got me good. You missed my...” His voice rasped out these syllables.

And coughing comes and coughing and coughing. His hand reaches for a pistol which rolls his bicep for me to see the badge. The pistol moves from him with my knee.

“When are you going to die?” I ask.

And I feel those words come and hit me without knowing. They sounded both like me and me as a child asking when I could go back outside.

A shudder of the throat beneath me comes, and I feel a vibration of vocations of lungs under me then a trichotomous gasp.

Then.

“ ”

Then.

”

The echo of nothing but blue eyes through white eyebrows through cataracts and dusty glasses stare into me.

My hands shake and search for more weapons and tricks and fall to a piece of paper in the Veteran Worker’s breast pocket. Eager for a distraction from the blood pooling to an off-black shade in the fading light of outside, I sit on the floor and read:

Tell me of torsion—the tweak and tension in your spine.

A glorious reprisal of how cities stack and stack to structure a skeleton. Construct the coils of
 your blood vessels into a pentagram and pray to the visage of your God it represents.
 Guzzle that meditative silence to satiate the all-consuming thirst for meaning—like the car
 needs gasoline.
 Like the machine needs the man.
 Needs the
 Man.

The room has grown to a sudden silence after I finish the poem.
Your handwriting looks like you used to write things a lot I say to this third body.
 And while I am distracting myself, I read the back:

3/2020

TO BE POSTED ONLY IN SPACES DESIGNATED BELOW:

LDS Church Properties

City Creek Mall

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University of Utah Business School

Call for Work.

In conjunction with the authority and network of the Salt Lake Government and Police Department, HerbaLife are hereby looking for individuals for the following roles:

- Engineering for:
 - o Train and trainlines.
 - o Bridges
- Maintenance for:
 - o BetterBreath systems
 - o Trainlines and 4 support structures supporting located (applicant must live within 5 miles of one of the listed structures):
 - Fairpark Station
 - Temple Square
 - Central Pointe
 - University of Utah Hospital
- Multiple support units for:

- Police department (apply separately)
- Engineering staff

Inquire at the number below for further details. Preferred applicants will be between the age of 21 and 35 and have military background.

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.

Do the count.

.

1. I sit with the corner of the room fitting over my stare in a fixed mask.

.

2. This mask hides me from myself; my body sitting and just...

...I haven't thought about any of these at all since we left the Grid. My father taking us away from the Doctor saying "We need more air." And I protested saying it wouldn't matter where we went and that...and was caught by a bludgeoning stare.

.

3. *And then it said nothing else. I remember being angry because that didn't answer if we would be back or anything about where we were going.*

.

4.

. But we left, and like I thought, eventually these Workers followed.

5. *Workers, well just people before, like you...*

The body which was my floor I move from; my body resistant to having known it to be similar in animation to my own.

...answered these calls, leaving the other parts of you behind to kill people like me.

.

6.

The buzzards have landed near the other two bodies, so I make quick work of finding out what they have on them, realizing my body is still shaking when I stand back up. *Such a violent anger I find in my stature as I move through this space for the Workers dead here, and those who built the Grid into what it is now.*

The Pack doesn't have much...

I find car keys on the headless body.

...space.

One of them even had more water, something I hadn't thought about today: stripping bark of plants and eating it which held apparently enough moisture.

But I feel baptized as the tepid water rushes through my body.

A coursing reunion with my bodies

animation and connection to its parts.

.

On the desk, in the station above the last body is a copy of The Things They Carried, a single lamp burning from some eternal oil, and an almighty amount of dust.

And under the lamp, a single document stapled together with a green plastic title page:

Dr. Rebekka James
 "Pollution, Hypoxia, and the Economy of Air"
 University of Utah
 2020

How...

strange to find this here.

Sunlight goes to that pencil-shaded grey of an encroaching twilight. In the lamp, I find (to find: I feel tremors like the earthquakes entirely in me. In me entirely? In me...my entire-ty? I shake on...) myself reading one of the pages left:

To have prepared would have meant a more meaningful engagement with the encroachment of private, and unregulated companies and their own bought-and-paid-for examples of what a person's needs are. The basic wide-spread notion from the federal and state government has always been consistent: upholding the quality of life for those who are important to them. And importantly, though this is a direction for something else entirely, a totalitarian creation of what "quality" of life means to both the governing body and their subjects (I briefly return to this when discussing "need").⁶

This has been shown with the infiltration of BetterBreath, and BetterBreath like products from inner city corporations and the lack of regulation, taxation and equal distribution of. West Valley, Rose Park, and Redwood Road from 10th North to 100th South still report only a single unit: a lone shadow in a 7/11 parking lot on North Temple and 11th West having long been destroyed despite it being one of the first in the early weeks of reports between March 1st and 14th 2019.

The actual "need"—as the government and the corporations assign this need for actually breathing—becoming more and more of an actuality as the earlier section of this details outlining the heavy increase of air pollutants driving up at risk parties' deaths and number of infants born with lung, or other upper respiratory disorders.

Even now as I write this, in April after 1/4th inch of rainfall, the PM is 57.1.

Therefore, something must give for the entirety of the Salt Lake Valley, and not just those able to afford the outrageous "Dollar per PSI" claims. Either there must be a monumental shift in spending from the private corporations (who have established themselves officially as a part of the local government as a pure show of economic stability over concerns for actual governance, but I digress) and these corporations involvement in the ecological portion of the State government to regulate the pollutants per million distributed every second of everyday by the growing amount of trucks, machines, and factories used to support the Inland Port. And this regulation needs to make room for a stipend and regulated spending afforded only to the health of each citizen unable to breath 8 months out of the year in their home city. Congruently, this plan could include the supplementation of Better Breath products as free alternatives to what the stipend plan would include.

Or, the entire chain, coercion, disinformation campaign (especially the people employed by the companies hired to come door to door to your home and pretend that there is someone in cardiac or other duress on the sidewalk only for you to follow, and unsuccessfully "resurrect" them and have the person produce a BetterBreath that magically does) and multi-trillion dollar corporation must be taxed. And the taxes must be used to meaningfully improve...

The lamp closes in on a flicker—outside the buzzards don't call at all. Busy with the ripping, the tearing and the action of making something become just another awful, and easy part of them.

I haven't read anything of hers since that day we were assigned her essay in Introduction to Biology. It was a slender read – 7 pages on brine shrimp. After I read it, I went over to her house and demanded: "This is a metaphor, right?" And she stood on the porch, beer in hand – Benny bent over the stove in the back, and she just laughed, then told Benny to make me some too. We talked while mosquitos rammed into the glass door outside about how it was.

And seeing I am doing a good job so far of distracting myself, the rest of that memory is...

"There is another axiom to science" Rebekka had said to me. We were in her bathroom now, she was putting her contacts in as she had been called in for an emergency at the University. It was late, almost 10PM, and Benny was doing the dishes. "Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong." I remember seeing my face, framed by a bobbed haircut that I thought made me look older. I had just cut it so it would stop falling from my bun in matches.

"That doesn't sound very scientific, just...normal really." I had responded. Rebekka had stopped and stared at me in the mirror, then that one Smile came and she turned to me and put her hands on my cheeks, saying: "Perhaps. But the scientific thing about what makes something normal, is how you prepare to change it." She then untied my hair, something I didn't even let mother do, and ran her hands through it. "The bangs do make you look older, but the length is perfect for how inquisitive these cracks in your eyes are." She had said and left to kiss Benny while I blinked into the mirror.

I searched the body again, finding another water bottle. A plastic vessel with a single proprietary use.

In the silence of the kitchen Benny came into view of the mirror. "What now?" I asked his reflection. He stretched out his arm to me – a glass of brilliant amber bourbon in his hand.

"Looks like you get to join me in what I have come to know as my basic state: waiting to know." He smiled, and his smile was always so much more boyish – rich and lively as if he was always receiving an award.

It was my first ever drink, and I never told anyone about it, nor what was said under the hazing scarf of clouds above us:

"

And those outside – after fighting the buzzards to a distance where they stared and cursed me in their own way. *There are things no one tells you about* I think when I smell, but really feel with a sense of sight and identification both innate and strange to me, the opening of flesh. They glisten midnight oil in the young moonlight.

The car outside does start, and there is more gas than I ever could expect.

You are taught to drive stick.

I push in the clutch; the poem from the man with the glasses and the hole in his belly grinds into place in me here.

How to scan a horizon, read big complex words, or even kiss with your eyes open the first time.

I check the mirrors. I sit silently listening to the coyotes' yowl and yip to caution each other against the engine of the car.

Holding back tears is the morning rain; it is those childhood times of waiting for my parents to get me from my first climbing or first soccer clinics when I was 4 or 5 or 8 or...

But never, ever... The tears come and my left-hand bats them away while my right finds drive in the transmission...*ever*. And the static in the proud purple of night reverberates from the humming background noise of coyotes; of munching buzzards; and life becoming only a stale grafted haunting.

That nothing in life is fair.

The car erupts to life: the headlights backlight the desert's fervor and the tires crunch and gnaw at mysterious microscopic fauna beneath.

And you never get over death.

.

Not even when its right here with you.

The rear-view mirror frames my now Goggled eyes watching absently another day pass.

The shape of the station becomes at once in this brief reflection, homely: a quant porch, an evening reading light, and three ghosts quick to move in.

In tears, in me, I remember me at 14 after a soccer match breathing through a beating heart. I was wearing a face mask because the air was already so bad, and after 120 minutes of filtered, blood tasted breath, I sat on the pitch: seething with wrath. It seems that being internally enraged had always been my coping mechanism.

I can't bear to do the count so instead I hold my breath and drive on.

Those ghosts gave me 4 more rifle rounds, a map of the Uintas in the glove compartment, 2 throw away bottles of water one of which lives in my canteen, that poem, that essay, and a roll of toilet paper to carry.

The redness in the west has past, and we, my transient tree roots, and all...

“Walking Palm goddamnit, that’s what it is called” I say aloud, and the open wind catches my voice and takes it out the window to live with the ghosts behind me.

...are heading east to the Grid.

:|7|: **In**

In the night, like all the nights spent here, silence crushes me.

Some leakage of that pressure burns out a life when a thrumming
calls out from the distance in the West.

The thrum of the train strains out a delicate screech:
its jaws lined with mechanisms which are all metaphors for
motion and progress.

Words like “ignitor” and “turbine.”

The thrum announces itself as a whipping howl of unprecedented
despair. A howl holding all the brilliant moments that make
bright, shiny machines spin and purr.

6 feet above me, the rails clamor and quake and my body sways--
the trauma of an earthquake sewn into my bones so that any
rumble, or thud in the night sends me back to that day in the
garden.

The trains song of guts and gears wails past. The primordial lights
and body of it comes to be only another shape in the horizons of
grey shapes.

The count is: **[2 PSI/2 By volume.]**

On my back, the pack of both our BetterBreaths weighs into me in
an uneven pain. A surface whose tension can neither break nor be
absorbed. I have already given up so much to accommodate this
weight keeping only these pages next to the one Nalgene with a
third holding water.

In duality, the absence of salt’s great weight leaves a cave of un-
weight. This cavern boors into me and feels to even press out a
shadow against folds of my animation inside its absence.

I check these as a matter of routine in my reflection on these moments before. Times I thought I would never think of again with you, but now, in my movement, they come with me too. *The Structures, the rails, the workers, the salt, the exchange for air, and the deliverance of many from the city to be pursued by the workers is abundantly clear to me here.*
Here in a city discarded for a symbol of economic stature.

And it goes.

But what an outrageous cruelty to think such complex differing lives were all reduced to these shapes. Of those that could afford to buy into the life. As projected by your work, and that of the many, the air became the biggest enemy of life.
And the BetterBreaths became essential to breathing which is something my mind keeps reminding me as if it doesn't know how to believe it.
I need to keep moving
[1.8 PSI/2 per Volume]

The structure near Central Pointe was always where we said to meet.

I can even see it now from where I am. Its massively established with shapes crowding it. Looking to gain salt as it falls.
 It will be guarded.

And there will be a lot of people still there.
 And I begin walking south. And I do something I never do anymore, seeing as I am already remembering, I take out the poem I wrote for you the night before you were killed. That night hate as a word doesn't swell with enough meaning to describe. The Workers in the mines cackled after us in gunshots stopping only because of their instructions to. When you bled out...

The grief surpasses my emotional regulation and builds to breach the levee again.

Such a tremor.

Such a tight, ton of weight to suffocate me.

Even as I cry and can't even see anymore, it pulls me down.

*I meet it there however
 and sit with*

it.

I breathe in much deeper than I can afford to.

.

.

.

Listen, my growing child of unusual grief.

Shush.

I know what you hold.

It is uncertain forlorn sadness.

I see you.

*I hear you scream, and cry wild, inhuman tears. I feel you. I feel you
tear, and gnash at the lesions of my mind to find room to fester and
wallow.*

But please, my child.

Let's call you Y, as in why.

Y. I need you to stay here with me.

*To see this through. To stop keeping me from seeing with those tears,
and to stop holding me to the stones of these streets instead of moving.*

We will move together, you and me.

*With those sprained muscles that know more about the memory of loss
than having.*

*With this throat born for yelling and hating. We will bend it as a willow
branch for asking and keeping secrets again.*

Shusssssssh, Y.

I need you here with me.

[1.4 PSI/2 Per Volume]

I breathe out.

.

For Rebekka—

Blue light; no moon

Vast.

Then in sapphire it spent.

An empty lit sky, a canvas before me.

Begging.

Fix me in a fixture below you

Send out help in lasting sighs of anchors

Over

The

Side.

Pull me through you. To you.

Into the quiet that lines out the night

She's watching

Dressed in casual clouds against the cold.
Waiting.
Her brain tangled like my vines in anticipation.
So far, stampers still surround.
Holds you to.
Holds
You
Through.
Its sweet embrace. Its sage kissed breath.
Enveloping into arms.
Waiting.
In when we went.
Down.
The anchors made light of our weight.
Your arms became the tatters of what made matter and the blue light went white.
In blue eyes.

An unknowledgeable anatomy.
Sinking.
Through vast blue.
Casting.
A kaleidoscope of incandescent fractals.

--Benny

So much dust.

I am filled with it as I follow cairns left by the Workers. Small orange bulbs of light reflecting from my headlights which streamer past while the vehicle blitzes forward.

I stop before the highway to Las Vegas, to put gas from the can on the back in.

Such impermeable darkness surrounds me in this vessel along its sea. Somehow, I feel even more alone than before. Some spectral sailor without anchors and only sails bent on leaving the shore forever behind.

I grab the water again, and from the Pack falls the notebook as well. The second of your letters is here.

This one has a small wallet-sized picture of me folded in. Plump and buoyant my infant body is swinging in some park. You can see my father's left hand and his legs all bordered by tiny me's wild, wide smile.

On the back it says:

Alina- Age 5- Liberty Park- Summer.

The letter reads:

09/21/19

Today is your birthday, and all on our run, I reflected on you getting older.

And that pursuing feeling I feel growing in strength. A growth of a search for where you can belong, but also, after our conversation this evening next to the creek up Big Cottonwood, I see you are searching for a "where" that means you have a piece of this place as your own. Like how you capitalize your clothes, possessions, and things you own. Your voracity only understands hunger and purpose: never a pause for how you came to that favorite leather jacket (which was your father's during the Syrian conflict) or your only ring (mine I saw you take from the bathroom when you graduated and cried about later not because you stole it but because I wanted to be the one to give it to you today, on your eighteenth birthday. It is the oldest ring in the family, from my great-grandmother.) How strange it is, Alina, to have the feelings for you which I do. This feeling of unmistakable pride and reverence for the woman you already are—were already at 10 and wouldn't cross the street unless we let you go in front of us. God know I wasn't always a bad parent; you were just so stubborn about it and I had to pick my battles— and a feeling of soft fear. Fear that this determination that sinks its teeth in so deep and so often into you, may lead you to ruin.

But being with you, seeing your copper hair turn to corn-silk in the gold of the afternoon sun today and hearing you talk flippantly about your future at college as if it had already happened and you were the leading professional on, as you called it, Environmental Humanitarianism, I felt a peace with my lack of control over you. That you will cross that street ahead of everyone and prevail as the only granule of sand left in a sea of broken glass.

That my lack of control is also an armament of love. So, with love, here is that ring.

Metaphorically of course.

All my love and more to come,

Mom.

And here you are with me, after such a distance of so much more than I could ever speak to you of if I could speak to you at all, in this great expanse of solitude and...and...

And take off my Goggles to cry

...because when I took that ring I just wanted it and I knew you wouldn't give it to me except...

And I see myself get wrapped up in this small and amazingly "normal" feeling of frustration over something that does not matter at all.

I allow myself this time though, to feel it all. And I hear her voice saying it slowly in the timing of meditation: as so within, is without.

I lean against the car. The wash of winds slows to a smolder.

Do the count, I think in your voice: the first time you said that, the first time I ever patched in when we first left the Dr.'s house together to seek a new refuge. I see your grey eyes smile and hold my hand over the patch to show me the pressure and technique.

"Soft in a way that feels..." You showed me by blowing an even amount of air over my wrist... "Like that. But do that." You saw the ring then, and I saw in your eyes the wrought it caused when you pulled back.

I remember wanting to not give it back and to give it back.

1.I take off the ring – its great rose gold embalming the iris-shaped turquoise holds me in its solid prison of reflection.

.

2.I take both your letters and roll them up inside the ring and I find the deepest roots of a yucca plant. Once I had all but dug it up, I bury the ring there: some feet below the sand.

.

3.It won't stay. Just as you and dad didn't stay. Just like I will leave, it will in some way, but like you said:

Not having control is a function of love.

.

.

4. And I fill myself with the expanse of air only desolation can provide.

Back inside, the vehicle hunkers into the sand and crowd me with walls. The inquisitive windshield gazes ever East. The suspension of the dust rolling through dunes and sage brush skitter out carnival shadows: *a micro-performance of persistence and presence, as haunting and as jovial as beginning something without knowing what will occur from it.*

1...

2...

3.

And I press on, in the jaws of determination.

I breathe in, and the southern sky climbs to the fetal sight of a morning. A glimpse of the new day shines off the rails of the older train.

Over, in a climbing arch, this top rail climbs to a summit: the tower at Central Pointe.

We made it here, together. Without you but still, as I said at your side, you are always where I am. Though it, the loss of you, prods the open wounds of this child of grief, you persist as that personified feeling of presence.

And we made it.

And there are.

People.

Everywhere.

And the meter reads: **[.7 PSI/1 per Volume]**

And one ghost from my memories haunts the top of the tower with their arm badge.

With their height.

With their rifle.

One worker keeping omniscient watch over dusk.

I exhale.

: | | 8 | | : In the Grid

Do the count:

1.

. Those at the gate, in some unspoken nonchalance, just let the vehicle cruise past them. I pull up the Mask: the respirator whirs thin bursts of air into me.

. I feel the ghost of my Mother feed line through the tissue in my fingers into the groove.

2.

.

.

[4 PSI/4 per Volume]

I cough so much the car bounds from the edge of the road narrowly avoiding a crash.

I forgot I was holding my breath.

When the fit releases me, I see the glint of the Structure we talked about meeting at as a sort of Plan B those months ago. The Dr, she always felt it would be the last one to fall: sort of the...what did she call it...

"...crux of their observation. It will be as vital to them to hold the Structure as it is for us to make use of it. Think of it as a watering hole or a Mecca: when all is lost, people will re-center there."

I can't begin the passage of thought to even know how anxious I am for your voice Dr. James. I have so...

In between the "s" and the "o" of that thought, I feel the animal in me jolt: its spine spires and chemicals of awareness pour in lavish rain from the crest of its brow to the tip of its furred tail.

I stop the vehicle.

The dusk is sleepy with dust meandering through the gravitational pull, taking its time before settling into the surroundings. The concave structures of buildings caress the rising sun. An unnatural shadow falls from them in a tethered arch, growing back into the stature of themselves seeing what the light brings to them.

What is it though...

I get a top the vehicle, and load a round from that ghost in the Station into the Rifle. I put the Scope on and lay prone, this time, aiming with the sun at my back, confident that will cover the glare enough.

I fall to that Structure: Central Pointe, located where the lower rails meet the upper ones.

Where the sunlight has not fallen, but already shapes gather to coalesce into one shimmering sea of a shadow. Where the Structure, that of Rebbeka's allusions to, stands above: I see it now.

Yes.

There.

There where there is always a shadow on those below. But there — the rifle climbs the length of the building in a heartbeat —

There

II is: A Worker, and his own rifle.

The animal sinks its bones back behind the muscular weight of force, and friction. Its ears back, teeth out and it is here, with my limbic system crawling out my mouth, I remember to not get ahead of myself.

.

I slip into the routine of narrative practice:

I breathe in through exhausted lungs...

And this is what I think now: here. Such peculiar and pleasant things without anything but meaning exactly this. What duality. All in reference but without tethered association to my mental praxis from those dust and blood covered seconds in the days before.

...and exhale a tribute to the air's friction. My breath pushes out branches of my Bangs from the Goggles

and instinctually I think of the end.

In the Grid, it is easier.

Easier to watch the bunnies turn to dust in the robust evening sun. Easier to breathe through unfamiliar tubes, but familiar to the mental shape my memories have of them. As if an addition was made to my body in slow, slumbering progress and so I never had to get used to it. Only extend myself to it- like another branch of the moving tree reaching for my handfuls of earth to seep itself into.

Easier to aim, that great statement of belonging enveloped by the word itself. To aim: to summon clairvoyance from the obscure. To dwell in this pipeline of sight all while the shape at the end takes aim.

Easier to get swept away in the moments, this moment, of complete coming together.

In a blink, I breathe in.

Give me the need to never pray again.

I hold my breath, and the star stares in panic and it is exactly here I feel it.
The all-consuming motion of my primordial clay mold into one shape.

Give me...

A shot sunders a star into an universe.

:|9|: Birth of Sound

Patience as the sound of rain coming to an aromatic rest.

Listening in time with the viscera of a world passing you by.

I adjust my eyes- rubbing them with sloth and fingers- to see form
where that came from:

I write:

There are sounds that feel filling: a glass with wine filled to the brim

*It reminds me of my old favorite songs. How they are both just songs
which are all just sounds, and entire meanings of more:*

smells,

politics,

even exact feelings carved into the sandstone pillars of memory.

"Cascade"

The first word birthed from the center of the dawn sun.

*There is a style of song which means "wall of noise" in my head I
remember now: rolling tremors of notes, and brilliant flights of swollen
vocals. It cascades over you in layers of snow.*

"Molten."

Follows.

The word always felt cooling, a juxtaposition of its meaning.

From the earth a molten movement displaces the life that was there in its wake of decimation. Here, is an explanation of relief: great pressure coming up and being redone as rock and formation.

*The sun leers: the random beams of radiation pool and bake us-
the us here and not here-*

in.

I see myself as one would see a figure from a far on a straight road.

The metaphors of how crossroads can be used to explain complication and the ways in which those swaying flowers and trash beside seek an explanation for the change done to one place over time. I feel myself in the bodies slumped over the bridges over the cities where tiny rocks made from conglomeration of sand and security make up the carpet. I feel my hands as anchors for my body as a simile of a vessel: a ship like that one stolen in the ancient thought.

Devoid of self if only because the structures of an asker and conversation about bodies broke the body itself down into something entirely different: a language of inputs with nowhere to go. What strikes me is the simplicity in explaining inside my mind what these things are and their shape over me as they pass by: the sights of streaming sunlight, the sounds of hollow distant parts of me sacrificed to get here, and of course, this Child of Grief which will be born from it all and carry with it the cooperative mechanisms of its own body of change.

“Body”

“A curling hand of pressure holds me to explanation: what makes a body? It is a new question...”

...which instantly my mind snags on needing to ask you about, Reb.

And there it is...

[.6 PSI/1.5 Per Volume]

...again.

My grief. My feelings about my feelings, which by scientifically is an understanding of a body. And no tears, only the splinters of dry, compressed grief for you.

...

And it...

...no

This neither simply goes...

I want to hold it, feel-

Be it.

This amber ephemera hue of a feeling-

This thorn of thought – as all thought.

Streams.

Strips me of

Me

Of

You

I will not simply go.

I see the grip of my sinew ripple away from my femurs. I hear the amalgamation of turmoil and tremendous joy boil into evaporative mists of representation as I put this new sound into words. The sound of being overwhelmed: an engine whir of inescapable motion with no origin.

Loss is an experience of love: the lasting span of time here now paints out how I long for the permanent times with those gone.

The smiles of people crossing the street.

The lingering stares when waiting for me to answer a question.

Your eyes, the peridot brilliance which reflect my cartoon face, seeing me then. And me, in this empire of dust and desolation,

see you then.

By that all-mighty sound – crack of lightning, combustion of aromatic sensations: that.

Sound.

Redefines.

Sound.

So direct, so intent, so far, so...

And all I can think from hearing and seeing and being in that moment of violent praxis is that tune to that song from when I was alone, in college learning to paint under the industrial lights of a studio built by stolen cinder block:

"It's the big show...tongue tip tied to the roof of my mouth
Bad naughty little angels come rushin' out...."

Maybe it has happened, Child of Grief. Maybe we all did die.

I can't even breathe, so it is a good thing I don't have...

[.3 PSI/2 per Volume]

...any at all.

-----Material Used-----

Page 37: Ezekiel 30:12

Page 40: Bridges over Barriers by Neighborhood Walks 2005; Amy McDonald and Jimmy Lucero at INT 15 overpass: 300 North 700 West, SLC, Utah.

Page 52: "Goodbye, Blue Sky." On The Wall by Pink Floyd

Page 66: "Two Inched Horse, 2 Faced Monsters." On Lonesome, Crowded West by Modest Mouse

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Spaces

Sugarhouse Coffee, SLC
 People's Coffee, SLC
 Coffee Garden, SLC
 Sugarhouse Artist Collective, SLC
 The River at Westminster College, SLC
 Stansbury Island, Utah
 San Ysidro, New Mexico
 Valley of the Gods, Utah

-----Epilogue-----

Suggested Listening: Tezeta by Mulatu Astatke

I have a specific relationship with breathing. At 6, I had more water than air in my lungs and the monthly bouts of pneumonia became a part of an early development laden with hallucinations, religious family involvement (it must be something we can pray away), and the birth of a life-long anxiety, sleep, and depression disorder. In high school, under the guidance of my father, I began running. This would become the most reparative step for my relationship with breathing.

If you aren't a big runner, I get it. In fact, I wouldn't even recommend it. But something perhaps you can connect with is this feeling: the clamoring ignition of your lungs set aflame by your heartbeat during emotional duress. A pulse both mortally defining and defying. That trying to catch your breath-ness sensations when your ribs, having flexed and tightened to wring out the last air in your lungs, shudder with a spilling pain. Or perhaps, unfortunately, you have had a panic attack: the deity of trying to breath. A Sisyphean attempt to convince your lungs to not collapse under the weight of such unidentifiable, and unmistakable pressure. Or, in contrast, the winged release of sensational breathing of being validated. That notion of being seen, or heard that seems to make your very blood cells stop their tasks and say to each other "we must have done the right thing?" All this, and more, is the experience running gives you.

But still, if you don't want to run, don't: your knees will thank you.

In my mind, Alina is the type of person who runs despite breaking her ankle or having crippling asthma. Alina, or Ali as I am sure she would prefer, with the "a" being pronounced like the a in "a temporal" instead of the "a" in "apple"; her inspirations were wide, and numerous and in reflection now, I see that her as a character is more of a rhizome than a single branching tree as she would prefer in the desert near the Ranger Station. Still with roots, but of such that are so verbose and complex she, in her life, will never know the extents of. Alina's desperate conviction to fill her lungs with everything she deserves sees her murder, sprint, do yoga, and even once, drink water. As this line from a friend who I cannot describe with words, and the feelings with whom I care for is even more ignominious, was used to build her as the militant force of motion:

"I am tied down: both by the presence of my deep, ancestral trauma and the realization that I don't have to have it. It is mine, but I can also let it go. Importantly, it is that choice that makes me...me."

This correlation of curating a character centered on the theme of breathing free in the desert with the motive of control and the motion of reparation of trauma for a sense of self became a refining process of what it means to cultivate for me. To grow, to harness, to foster some part of me, as Alina is an intimate portion of my being, without control of it. I think back now on the moment she is lying in the sand pointing the rifle at the Station. It wasn't planned for her to reflect on her time with Doctor Rebekka James through the motion of yoga...after she just killed two people and spent the day sun-burning her eyes while staring through a rifle scope, it just came to be. As many knots of resolution do during the process of breathing through complex emotions and sitting with that discomfort.

Alina is a testimony to the sand, and wind that cakes into tattoos of experience and hardship. A valiant stand for air, and the right to fight for what we deserve.

She is my love story to breathing.