

~Profound Experience of Staying at Home
Issue 5
April 26, 2020

~PROFOUND EXPERIENCE OF STAYING AT HOME
A QUARANZINE
APRIL 26th 2020
ISSUE 5



Edited by Lucy K Shaw
First Edition
April 26th 2020

Cover by Rachael Lee Nelson
(quarantined in Portland, Oregon)

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Hi,

All my friends said I didn't have
to do the issue this week.
They said that people would
understand.
But I told them that I wanted to
do this one.
And I needed them to help me.

My Nana died on Monday night.
Not from coronavirus, but from
cancer.

We knew it was coming, since
January.

That's why I am in England,
where I'm from.

We came to say goodbye,
and we were lucky, in some
ways, we got a long one.
But still, the shock is
inevitable.

It's hard to live your own
personal tragedy, when the
whole world is imploding.
It's hard to tell your dying
grandmother that nobody
can visit her anymore.
It's hard to watch her
deteriorating over facetime.

It's hard to choose which 10
people can attend her
outdoor, 10 minute funeral.
It's hard to plan for a
Celebration Of Life on
fucking zoom.
It's hard to grieve and go to
work and write her life
story and make a
'quaranzine' in the same
week..

But I know I would feel so
much worse if I wasn't
doing *this*.

I know everybody would
understand, or wouldn't
even think about it.

But it's important to me.

Now this has started.
We have to record this
time.

And people are sad.
And I'm sad.
So this is part of it.

Today would have been my
Nana's 90th birthday.

I feel insane.

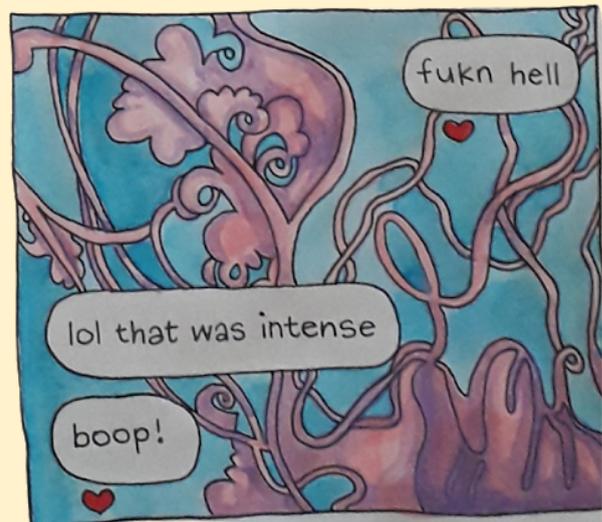
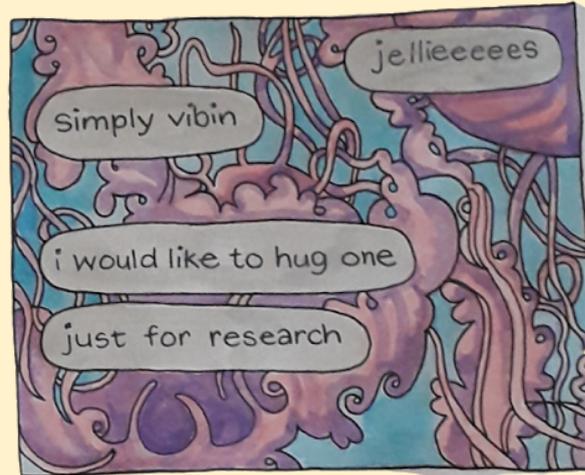
But here we go.

This is the fifth issue of the
Quaranzine.

Thank you for reading.

And please stay safe.

Lucy



The Clocks Have Stopped

Kate Norris



“Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone...” In *Funeral Blues*, W.H Auden captured the sentiment that when grief knocks, everything comes to a standstill. Life as you know it can become a thing of the past, a daily endurance, an interminable task.

It was early December when he died and Auden’s poem was one of the funeral reading options. It wasn’t chosen in the end, but since February this year, it has become a daily refrain for me. The clocks have stopped.

I returned to London in mid-December, to a city on Christmas speed. I was sluggish, bleary-eyed and puffy-faced. Grief had accompanied me before, in a different time, a different place and I knew the tricks it could play. I was fearful of what it had in store for me and I was scared that I wouldn’t be able to pretend. Keeping up the pretence is key to survival.

Every night I looked out of my bedroom window, a cigarette dangling four storeys above the ground. I looked at London's skyline and listened to the hum of the city. I looked at the sky and searched for an answer.

How was I going to act like everything was *normal*? My best friend messaged me: Don't isolate yourself.

Grief was wedged in my chest, coiled tightly around my heart. Normal. How to be normal? Stop - All of the clocks - Cut - Off the telephone - Put - Out the stars. I was at risk of descending into a whirlwind of wine, of friends, of work. I was worried that isolation wouldn't be the problem, I was worried I'd lose myself in people, I was worried I would disappear.

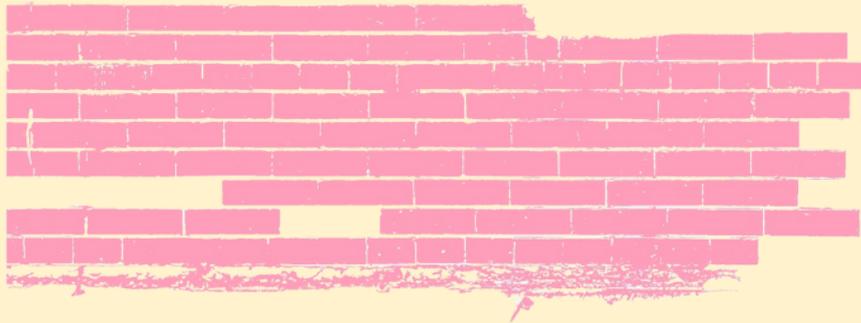
Then on a Friday afternoon in early March, I was sent home and told to stay there. I thought it was just going to be me and my housemates. But my ghost is here too. After dark mostly.

Sometimes there's an invitation; a song, an old message, a Facebook memory. Other times, a surprise visitor. I have nowhere to go. I have nowhere to hide. I am alone with my ghost. I don't keep the door locked. We have good days and bad days. Tears, arguments, and some recriminations. But there's also tenderness, a wry smile over a shared past.

On other days, in other times, when we weren't all at home, I might have shared my grief, but not now. Everyone has their own to contend with. Searching online for answers about loss, you can find a list of events that can trigger grief; relationship break-up, loss of health, financial instability, losing a job, loss of a friendship, loss of safety, death of a pet, death of a dream. Today we experience a global trauma and grief is part of all our lives.

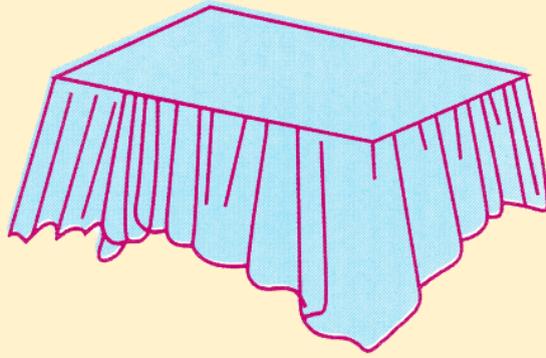
In the end, the poem they chose to read was his favourite, T.S Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, "And indeed there will be time time for you and time for me, And time yet for a hundred indecisions, And for a hundred visions and revisions, Before the taking of a toast and tea."

Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance? I don't know which stage of loss I'm in right now but I'm coming to terms with my quarantine. It's granted the gift of time and time is all I ever asked for. The clocks - have stopped. I'm alone with my ghost. So let us go then, you and I.



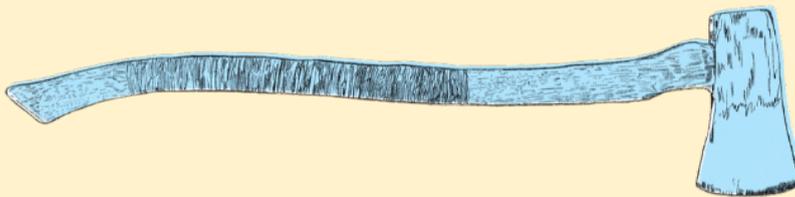
Five Small Poems by Sarah Jean Alexander

Artwork by Michael Inscoe



you can't dig your way out of a black hole

there isn't any dirt!



nothing else to do

sit near a window
plan breakfast in your head
watch the the earth
move around the sun

facetimeing with evan

smoking weed is cozy
i say to evan
hell yeah it is!
he says in reply



on top of bolton hill

i can't believe how frequently
we climbed rusted ladders
onto rooftops in baltimore
and how so few of us died



sometimes the day comes to a halt

you feel as though
you can't go on
without first eating
a bowl of warm risotto

For Mitzi : *Another Update*

Kate Shaw



Thank you everyone who has donated to help the people of Marinduque. We have now raised £750 / 857 Euros / \$927. Mitzi is so overwhelmed by your generosity and has been finding new ways to provide for her community. This week she has used your donations to provide meals for healthcare workers in her local hospital. She wants to extend her thanks to you all again. And so do I! Thank you!!!!



If you want to donate, [the campaign is still ongoing :\)](#)

Lockdown in the Philippines has been extended to May 15th, so even the smallest amount would be a huge help.



Detour in Belarus 2

Louise Trueheart

It started with bureaucracy – a technicality. One of those timing problems that make it so that you are in a position more precarious than you could have ever imagined. Igor and I have been in a long-distance relationship for three and a half years, jumping between Berlin and Tel Aviv on low-cost airlines. The CoronaVirus reared its head for the first time in my worldview on March 4th, when Igor called me in tears saying that, due to his recent return from a trip to Berlin, he would need to go into quarantine in Tel Aviv for two weeks. He was so afraid of being alone. He was afraid I wouldn't make it into Tel Aviv. I didn't believe it at first, and although he told me to reschedule a flight to try and arrive as soon as possible, I couldn't believe it was that serious.



It took about two hours for me to change my mind – during which time the State of Israel announced that it would be closing borders to all non-nationals – and seven hours later I was at the airport.

The plan had always been for me to spend six weeks in Tel Aviv. I had a residency with Asaf, a choreographer friend, and we were going to build a solo for me to dance at a festival in June.

When I arrived, Igor and I self-isolated together, getting food and booze from family and friends, understanding what this distance was for the first time while no one we knew in Europe, in the US, or Tel Aviv was experiencing it yet. By the time our quarantine was over, on a Friday, the restaurants were still open. On the Sunday they were closed.

In this brief window of time before the lockdown, Asaf and I went to the beach. There were cute dogs running all over the place, people hanging out and playing games and music. It was a bit breezy, but Asaf got into the water. Not joining him was my biggest mistake of 2020.

The lockdown in Tel Aviv was more of the same, except that we could go to the supermarket. Life continued, as little by little, things were cancelled, like the residency, Igor's classes, the beach. Then the Schengen borders started closing. Igor had a birthday. My parents in Paris went into lockdown and I realized that I wouldn't be allowed into France to see them because unlike them and my brother Henry, I don't have a French passport. The numbers in France climbed scarily. I woke up one morning and watched a speech by Macron and burst into tears.

This is when the claustrophobia of being far away from home really hit me. This is when I started wondering about my next steps. This is when I realized that for the first time in my life, leaving was not going to be a simple matter.



Igor and I fought once, after I got off the phone with my mother. She'd calmly asked me what my priorities were. My situation is complicated because I have an American passport, an emotional and familial tie to Paris where I grew up and where my parents have lived for 25 years, and my visa in Germany, where I've lived for the past seven years, expired in January. Under normal circumstances, one can travel and work as usual with an expired visa AS LONG AS you booked an appointment within the validity of your expired visa, and carry the document stating the date and time of your renewal appointment. I had been planning on applying for a permanent residence permit, which could lead to a German passport and end my life-long identity crisis of having a passport from a country I have never felt at home in, while having no official claim to my hometown. If I fucked up my renewal situation in some way... I just felt like I was running the risk of losing my one chance of being from the place I live in.

Igor and I fought because when I broached the subject of 'my next step', after the phone call with my mother, he didn't understand why I didn't see this as 'our problem.' He said he wouldn't survive not seeing me for six months, not knowing when we would see each other again, and how furious he was that he had to be the only one to worry about this. I was furious that he couldn't understand that this visa had to be a priority, how it was me that had a big problem, and that I needed him to be here for me, not to be terrified of losing us. I was angry that he was angry that I wasn't worried about us, too.

Time passed. We rearranged the balcony and it slowly became my favorite spot in the whole apartment. My EasyJet flight back to Berlin was cancelled, which I expected. But potential next steps started to multiply and complexify. I realized my visa appointment might get delayed. We could stay in Tel Aviv and then try to get to the US and camp out in Virginia with Henry and his girlfriend Sarah who had just fled New York



City. Or I could stick around until June in case the dance festival happened. I filled out a form on the website of the visa office, which basically let them know that I had the appointment and was waiting for news. The confirmation letter said, “re-entry into Germany will only be permitted with a valid visa.” I froze.

Three days passed in which Igor helped me call embassies, lawyers, airlines, my mother, and the German border police. The conclusion was, given that I was travelling with my rental contract and registration with the city of Berlin, that I had good chances of making it through to the other side, but that the final decision was up to whoever was on duty when I arrived.

What would happen if I didn't get through the border? Would I get 'deported' to the US? Would that negatively affect my ability to reapply for a German visa later? All parties acknowledged that all this was possible although very unlikely.

I ended up getting a flight through Belarus, because they hadn't shut their borders. Apparently, the only soccer championships that were still being held GLOBALLY were the ones in Belarus, so, according to my brother, everyone was watching and betting on those games.

The thing is, I have a criminal record in Belarus.

A few years ago I was travelling through there by train with an invalid transit visa. I ended up getting kicked off the train, my passport was taken away, and I was detained overnight in a deserted station on the border with Poland. I spent the night curled up in a nest fashioned from the clothes in my little red suitcase. (But that's another story.)

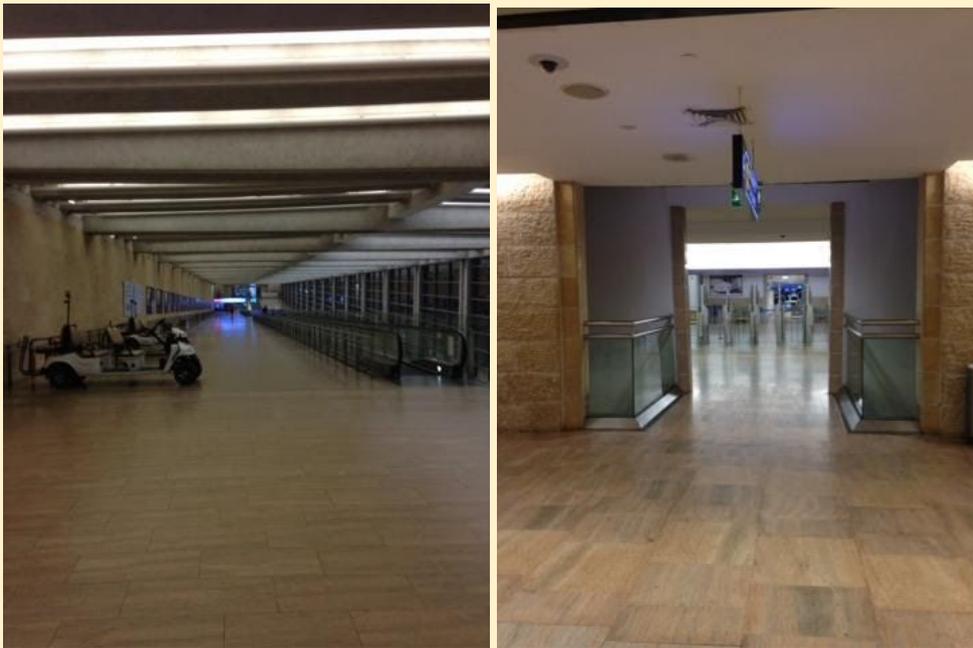
Saying goodbye to Igor has never been easy. You would think we would be experts, but the few days before and after travel are always charged. This time, my body was shaking when I hugged him goodbye for the last time.

A friend drove me to the airport in Tel Aviv. She said we should put on our masks since the most recent order from the government was to wear them at all times. She was sweet and comforting. I spoke to her in the warbled way one does when holding back tears.



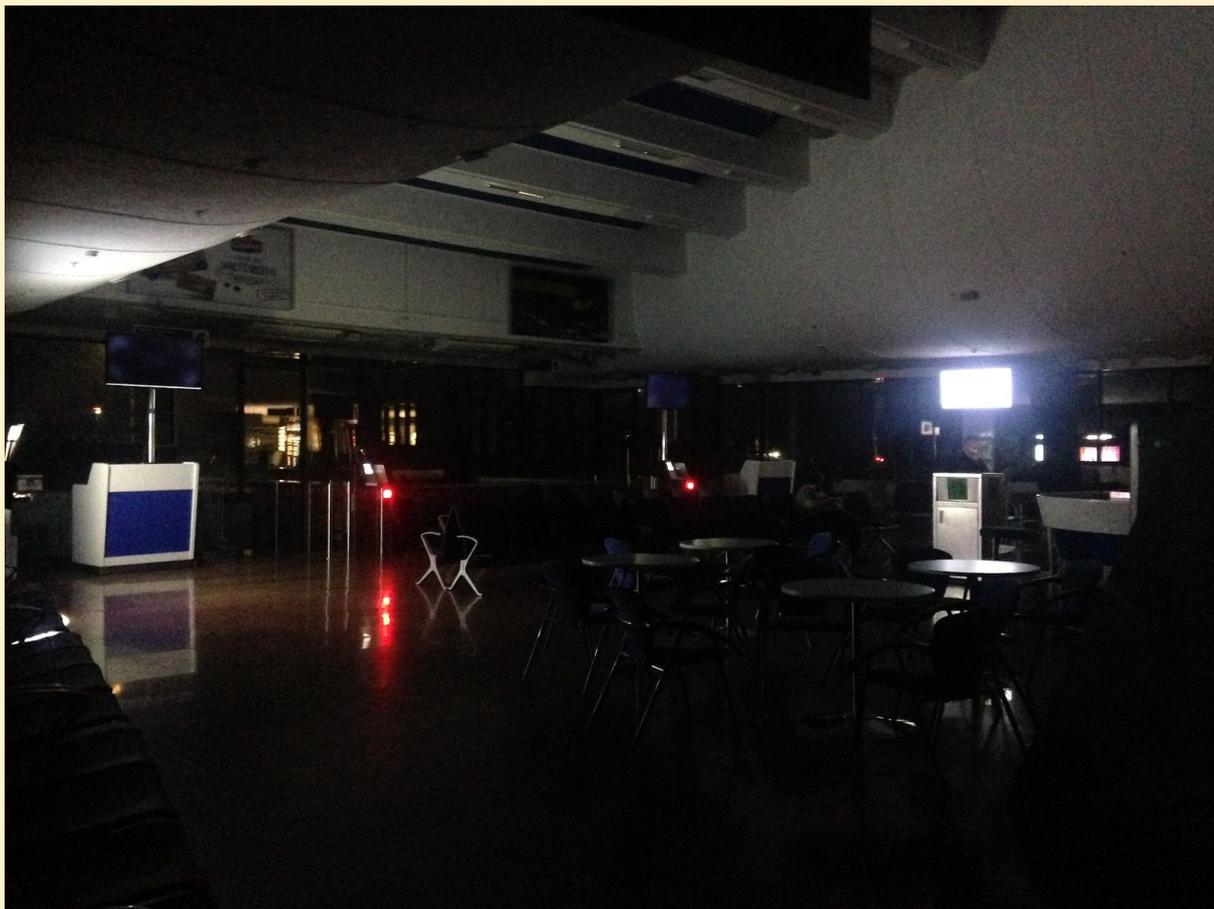
The only flight leaving Ben Gurion airport on Sunday evening, the 12th of April, was my flight. The place was deserted, but lit. People working there were sitting around talking, looking like there was nothing for them to do. The kind person at the check in counter ignored the extra kilo of weight on my luggage. Even though I was flying on two different airlines and had booked all three legs of my trip separately, she patched my suitcase all the way to Berlin, reducing the amount of times I would need to go in and out of immigration with an expired visa to one.

In my fanny pack (for easy access) I stored alcohol wipes, hand sanitizer, about six pairs of silicone gloves, my passport, phone, and my charger. In my backpack was a grey folder with my e-tickets, city registration, rental contract, recent tax documents, and letters from ten people gushing over how gainfully they were going to be employing me in Germany this year.

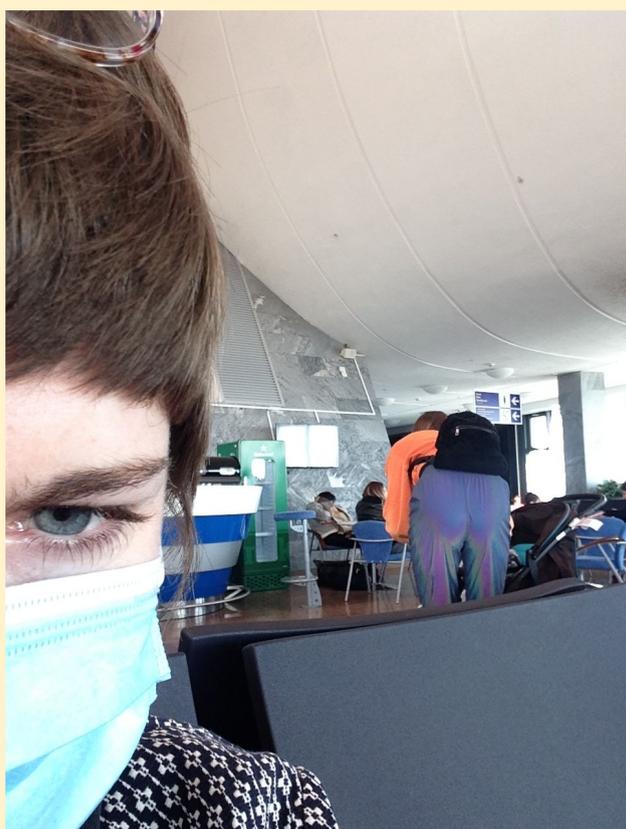


The flight to Minsk was delayed about 20 minutes, during which time people spoke anxiously on their phones and stood around the counter like hungry tigers waiting to be fed. A guy in business class kept asking when business class boarding would be. He was ignored by the flight attendant for the most part, and when they called for boarding, there was no invitation for ‘our business class flyers to please come to the front.’ We just lined up and got on.

When I got to Minsk it was four in the morning. This airport was empty like the last, but Duty Free was open and all the lights were off. Using the glow from screens and emergency exit signs I found my way to my gate. There was an empty bar/café counter. The big room was circular, walled with windows giving out onto the dark Belorussian night. The bar was like the stage – the bottom of the amphitheater, the wrestling ring, the opera at midnight.



I found a bench and, like I had a few years ago, curled up next to my backpack with my coat wrapped around me. I blindfolded myself with my late grandmother's scarf to keep out the oncoming dawn. I unhooked my N95 mask from one ear to let in a bit of fresh air for the first time since I'd left Igor's house. My chin was damp with condensation. Sounds of ghosts like me wove in and out of my dreams.



When I woke up I found that there was very little to eat in the airport. I bought a cappuccino and ate the rest of the nuts I'd brought along as a snack. I sent pictures of a hot young mom to Igor. She was also waiting to board the plane to Munich.

When they announced boarding around noon I sleepily waited for most of the people to file out. I handed them my passport, and as had been happening since I arrived in Minsk they took a little longer with mine than with others, which I assumed was because of my criminal past.

As the other passengers filed past me to the bus, I realized that the gate agents had noticed that my visa was expired. Dread filled my body as I calmly placed paper after paper from my grey

folder in front of them, explaining that I have all the proof of residence I need. One agent kept looking at me and snapping photos of my documents with her phone. Her colleague told me bluntly that I could not get on. He sent the bus to the plane and I was alone at the gate in Minsk with an empty nut jar and my passport once again in the hands of Belorussian border control. This is not where I had expected to encounter the problem. I thought I would need to humbly convince a German officer to see through the paperwork to the bigger picture. I knew how it worked there. I can even speak the language.

As I watched the bus get all the way to the plane, which sat about 500 meters and several lifetimes away from me, I said “I know it’s a special case, but please let the German border police decide.”



The attendant with the phone nodded her head, raised her eyebrows at her colleague, and called the bus back.

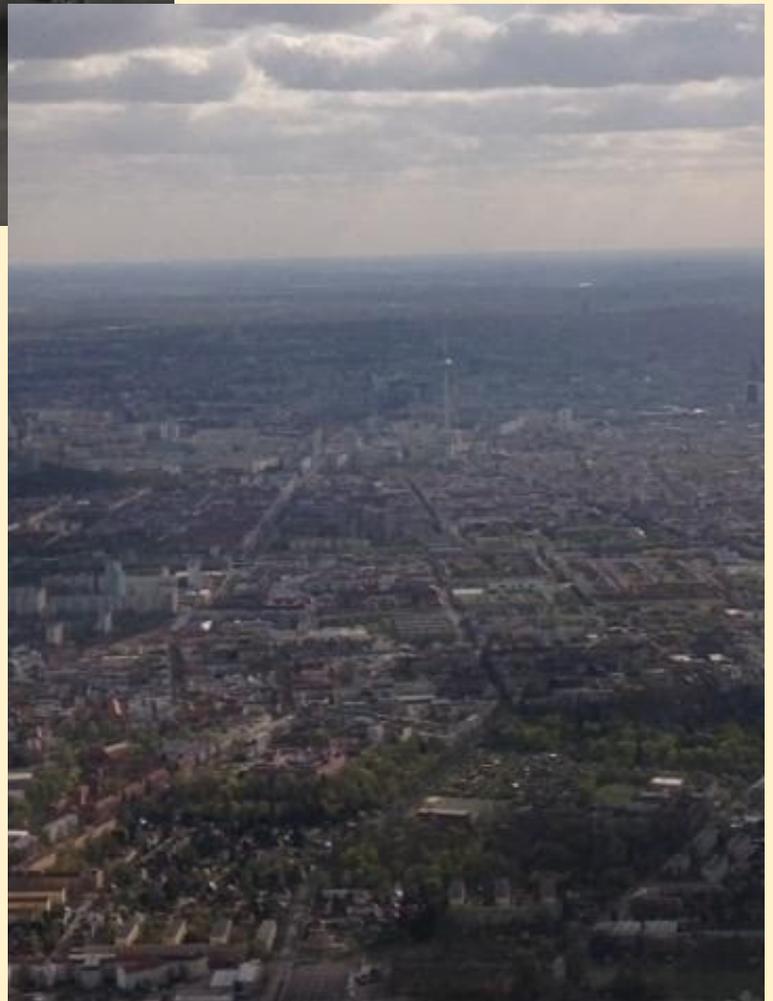
When I got to Munich I tied my late grandmother’s scarf around my neck loosely, and knotted it in an elegant way that I imagined said “totally serious and legitimate young white lady who will definitely be paying taxes and who loves your country and your language and whose paperwork is perfectly in order.” I walked through a security check, awkwardly joked in German with the people working there, and then went down to wait for the bus to change terminals. I knew that this was the big moment I had been waiting for.

When me and the one other person with me walked up to immigration, all of the booths were empty. No one was on duty. A young blonde officer with a low ponytail walked out and asked what we were doing here. We said we were going to Berlin. She said “ach so.” We handed her our passports, which she flipped through. His was German. She asked him what he was doing here and he said that although he lived in Tel Aviv and worked for the German embassy there (had I spoken with him on the phone, I wondered?), he was visiting his daughter. She said this was a little unusual and did he know he would have to quarantine for two weeks? He said yes. She looked at mine, looked at me, and said she would be right back.

We waited about five minutes.

She came back holding our passports and handed them back to us. She made sure I knew I would need to quarantine too, and I said “na clar” and smiled under my mask. She waved us through.





MAP OF CANADA

Emily Kendal Frey

There has to be a nicer way to say, "I believe you believe what you're saying"

Maybe: "But isn't everything a function of extreme nothingness?"

That I would continue in a behavior, often a thought, causing great damage to myself.

Perhaps a test of the god-hand: will it, could it, can anything save me?

Realizing soon-ish that of course god's gender is not the problem

At minimum that I am the god-tree.

That I would be responsible for saving myself still lands in the pile of Great Indignities.

Me, believing myself to be a question with a wrong answer.

My self-immolation was protest against the possibility of not being worthy.

I loop back to this question of worth and find it in me, ringing loud as a whistle.

That I would live under its canopy, torn on the question.

That, a bruised leaf, magnolia soft and crushed to sidewalk slime, we lived.

That we would hurt our lives as evidence of having learned to recognize patterns.

I walk past an old friend and it's me I don't recognize.

In the glasses store I become embarrassed and leave.

My mom filled lined blue journals, bought at a college bookstore.

Had a purse stuffed too tight with receipts.

I brim the same, contain the same, maroon, hair everywhere,

Not able to exist on a line and so wild at the edge of language, glutton with thought,

A self-imposed silence.

In the mirror I flop open then out.

POISON IS THE FUEL FOR WAKING UP

Every few weeks my life burns down

In the morning a bird eats me

This is the great hair nest

A joke

I could choke on the ocean

A person with a metal detector

Is cracking ridiculously small crabs

When the arches of kindness begin to stand tall again

I remember the edge of your bed

Keep it to yourself

You said

Big & Small

Crook

CONTEXT: This is a follow-up to the critically-acclaimed listicle I wrote for the first issue of the Quaranzine, ["24 Ways My Roommate Has Betrayed Me"](#). After 4 years living in a 9m² room, I have moved into a place of my own.



My friend said that when you get a kitten, they tell you not to let it out of your bathroom for a while, because it'll freak out if it's in too big a space.

More than once in my first few days in this new apartment, I found myself spending longer than usual in the bathroom. Really doubling down on the 20-second hand-washing recommendation. Never forgetting to moisturise my hands after. Adjusting the hand-towels. Moving the roll of toilet paper from the little shelf where it usually lives, to the soap-holder of the sink, and back again. Examining carefully all the cleaning supplies my predecessor left behind. Paying close attention to the particulars of the frosting on the faux-glass shower doors. Sliding each of the doors forward and back, making sure the travel is smooth. Noticing a small irregularity and deciding it's fine, doesn't need adjusting.

Sometimes I don't spend long in there at all. Go in, piss, then back to the kitchen. Sometimes it feels better to wash my hands in the big sink. There's more elbow room, and I haven't bought hand soap for the kitchen yet, so I use the dish soap. It dries out my hands a little, but it's OK. It just accentuates the wrinkles of my knuckles. I can pretend I look as old as I am. I can pretend I am an old man. Sometimes old people's spines get shorter, as their cartilage wears down. They shrink. I can wash my hands with the dish soap, with the picture of the frog on it, and I can pretend I shrink.

The kitchen is about the same size as the bathroom, but it has a window. It's a big square one, which makes me feel like I'm on TV, and the bikes outside are wondering what I'll do next. Maybe I'll use the

oven. I haven't had an oven in 4 years. I could make a lasagna. I used to love lasagna and chips when I was small. It was comfort food before I needed comforting.

I preheat the oven to the number the package says. I don't really read German, but there was only one number with a degree symbol after it, so I didn't even need to use my cunning.

I go back to the living room and try to get some work done.

A lot of exciting things are happening with my work these days, so it means there is a lot to do. The work is mostly fun, and I can get lost in it easily. I find my whole body tilts forward without my noticing, so I can be closer to the screen, and the thing growing inside of it.

Sometimes my laptop says things to me. Like, it's protected me from a threat, or what the weather is, or how to make boba tea at home. It sings me any song I want, almost.

I built my first computer myself. Most of the parts said they came from China, but I know now that they came from silicate minerals in the Earth's crust.

They don't usually separate the silicon from the other minerals when they make computer parts, because they think it doesn't make any difference. But I like knowing I have a mineral deposit on my desk that lets me talk to my friends, when we're both free.

Now and again, there are bright flashes of reflected light, as someone in the building opposite opens or closes a window.

This makes me tilt my body back, trying to guess which floor the person lives on. My spine gets a little longer, and I'm reminded to stretch my arms. I stretch them as far as I can, and I curl my fingers, touching nothing.

Then something cracks, and I remember my lasagna.





Three Horsemen Of Solitude

Carmen Brady



Lapsed Librarian

Words by Matt Nelson
Art by Jake Muilenburg

Did anyone else feel the sway of the new moon this last week? I was tossed about by it, a little more ragdoll than I would have liked. There were ghosts who followed us home, passing interactions with the landlord in the laundry room of the unnecessary unkindness type, deeply archived email dives of past hurts and hurtings of others, funky dinners, big old childhood pain projected on anything in sight. It was tough for me to stay accepting of me this week. But then there was also the pleasant (let us not forget to acknowledge that which is here and good): mistaking a grapefruit for a lemon when zesting for a lemon cream cheese frosting recipe, FaceTiming J about the ghosts, texting another J for a french translation for an early *early* Frank O'Hara poem, therapy's gentle wash cycle on warm, listening to Elliott's *New Moon* album, my partner's ability to lay beside and really hold and enfold the edges. I know that being semi-alone and left to my own geology has been awakening the stony ridges in me. I don't know if you feel similarly, but if you need to talk about books or about making horrible cookies because you used bread flour instead of almond flour or really anything else, you can email me at abigwindmattnelson@gmail.com. I'll be around.

This is what I've been reading, with at least one starred line:

Week 5:

Finished	
<p><u>Self-Compassion</u> by Kristin Neff</p> <p>“To see ourselves positively, we tend to inflate our own egos and put others down so that we can feel good in comparison”</p> <p>“Each person blames, the other for saying or doing something wrong, justifying their own actions as if their life depended on it”</p> <p>“It's unacceptable to be average in our society”</p> <p>“If you are a habitual self-critic, remember that your behavior actually represents a convoluted form of self-care”</p>	<p>I don't know why, but this book stumped me. It's taken multiple weeks to get through. I thought it was going to be done the week before last. Nope. Then this last week. Uh-uh. Then this week. It just kept going. The experience was akin to walking through a whiteout. Granted, I've never done this. My only knowledge is from Drury's <i>The End of Vandalism</i>, but what I imagine is a masking of the 3rd dimension--up and down, left and right, gone--where you plod forward (also, if you ever find yourself in a whiteout, it is highly discouraged to get out of your house or truck or ice-fishing hut, stay inside until it's over, which sounds familiar), you plod through the crunchy type of snow that lets you know each proceeding step will be equally resistant and why are you even walking you galoof, it doesn't seem like you're going anywhere, you can't see in front of you, or for that matter, behind you, but you march on. Like I said, you're just a point on a line, hopefully going somewhere warm. TBH, no reading could ever be as excruciating as all that tundra running, but I was seriously at a loss with this book. So much so that I started to doubt my own reading comprehension skills. I began to feel almost ashamed that I didn't know how to do what I love to do. My approach to reading is usually bifurcated into either full steam</p>



“Healthy romantic relationships allow us to realize that actually, we *are* valuable and worthy of care, that others *can* be trusted to meet our needs. Skilled therapists can also help change insecure attachment bonds by providing unconditional support to their clients.”

“Who is the only person available 24/7 to provide you with care and kindness? You.”

“Loneliness stems from the feeling that we don’t belong, whether or not we’re in the presence of others.”

“Even the fear of death itself stems largely from apprehension about losing companionship, closeness, and relationships to others.”

“By simply shifting our frame of reference from distinctiveness to similarity with others, we can dramatically alter our perceptions and emotional reactions”

“Like weather patterns, we are also an impermanent, ever-changing phenomenon arising out of a particular set of interacting conditions.”

“Discriminating wisdom recognizes when things are harmful or unjust, but also recognizes the causes and conditions that lead to situations of harm or injustice in the first place. When wrongdoers are treated with compassion rather than harsh condemnation, cycles of conflict and suffering can be broken.”

“Most people, even if they don’t blame themselves for current circumstances, tend to immediately go into problem-solving mode in such situations”

ahead (usually novels, memoirs) or fifteen minute chunks (short stories, poetry, non-fiction) where I rotate books for maybe an hour total. I don’t even remember how many times I’ve hit the buzzer after the quarter hour unsure if I actually read anything with this one. My mind kept slipping, wriggling out to think of something else. The thesis, as far as I can suss out, is that self-compassion is composed of three parts: kindness, an awareness of belonging to a common humanity, and mindfulness. Compassion is different from goodwill in that compassion must come after suffering. The idea is the old *not if but when* you hurt, how will you then take care of yourself. It reminds me of this conversation I once had with a student when she and her boyfriend were both sick. She said she was taking care of the two of them. I then asked who was taking care of her. She said she was. I wonder about this inverted physical metaphor for the internal self-compassion, is there a doubling when you take care of yourself? Because from what I can see, the act of self-compassion asks for a doubling of the mind. There is the hurt you, sad from some slight or being unseen by the world or criticized by the self (does this split you into thirds), and then there is the burgeoning caretaker you, who can soothe and sit with the hurt you. Neff collects a bunch of quotes and research and basically says if you can be with your pain, if you can be nice to yourself during that pain, if you can point your pain back to the eternal stream of others’ pain, then your life will cede all sorts of great bonuses. But how do you do this? How do I create another perspective separate from the pain with which to look at myself? Is this dissociation? Isn’t this creating a new border to fuzz out the pain? How do I feel hurt and unhurt at the same time? Maybe the point was glossed over in my read, but I think that it’s one of those things you don’t think too much about. Don’t think, just do, as we used to say in the warehouse. There’s lots of topics in here that did make me think negatively though: Neff speaks of her son who is neurodivergent as not “normal” and how that pains her (maybe she’s being 2011-*honest*, and I shouldn’t judge), on a section on the body there’s some real iffy stuff regarding diets and “overeating,” then there was this sex chapter about how she and her husband invoked all the hurt women who have ever existed during their lovemaking. Hmmm. I think maybe though I’m trying to learn to read for the good parts, and not be so negative, check my expectations from the get go. When reading a novel, I don’t really have that many expectations, which allows for a freefall tumble, whereas with a book called *Self-Compassion*, I want to know the tricks! I want to be more self-compassionate! Alas, I think I’ll just ask my brother--a nurse who teaches nursing students how to be self-compassionate.

In the Land of Men by Adrienne Miller

“Toni Morrison, probably the most important living American novelist, was relegated to a moon in deep space, mentioned only in a roundup of her agency’s clients.”

“That so many people had dropped whatever they were doing and had come outside for a few minutes to watch the sky seemed an expansive and noble thing to do. It also spoke to some profound need in the human soul: a desire for meaning, control, harmony. And for just that moment, when the sun went from disk to ring and everything was elegant and aligned, reality--that is, the world behind the illusion--opened its door and showed us what it was.”

“Editorial assistants are required to be discerning about the messages from their call sheets they choose to convey to their bosses. It is often the only exercise of creativity the editorial assistant possesses.”

“But saying you’re from Ohio does not even count as information. Everyone is from Ohio, it turns out. And, as data, it’s just not that interesting--saying you were from Ohio was like saying you were a seven on the pH scale, a neutral solution.”

“I also got to see how great journalists can, and do, fail, until they get it right. Failure, I learned early on, is a crucial part of the game, and anyone who does anything worth doing in the world is going to fail, and fail quite a lot.”

“They were creating something that was theirs alone in the world. This already seemed to be the most important thing.”

“It was just that these slushpile authors seemed so vulnerable and trembling in a way that the actual published authors did not.”

“feeling useful is an indulgence that most people cannot afford.”

“when you get thrown back into who you are, you’d better have something there”

“Also, I intuitively understood that few people go around rooting for the career success of a very young woman.”

“as the country went more and more off the rails, we all did the sensible thing and retreated inside our heads (and into university writing programs), and, broadly, our novels were now internal monologues--the dream world of the self.”

Name drop look ups: Harold Brodkey, Joyce Johnson (*Minor Characters*), “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold,” by Gay Talese, “Twirling at Ole Miss,” by Terry Southern, “What Do You Think of Ted Williams Now?,” by Richard Ben Cramer, Michael Herr, Peter Shaffer, “My Mother’s Killer,” by James Ellroy, *Telling Stories* by Joan Dideon published by Friends of the Bancroft Library called the Keepsake Series alongside Mabel Dodge Luhan, Jessamyn West, and Stephen Spender, (found out if you gave \$250 to this UC Berkeley Library, they’ll give you a limited edition book they put out almost every year), George Sanders, “The Term Paper Artist,” by David Leavitt, Hilma Wolitzer, Christopher Buckley, “Superman comes to the Supermart,” by Norman Mailer, “My Mailer Problem,” by Germaine Greer, Robert Hughes, “There Goes (Varoom! Varoom!) That Kandy Kololed (Thphhhhh!) Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby (Rahghhhh!) Around the Bend (Brummmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm...),” by Tom Wolfe, “This Be The Verse,” by Philip Larkin, Liv Ullmann, “In My Own Backyard,” by James Tate, Laura Riding, Kate Millett, Anna Akhmatova, Diana Athill, Elizabeth Jane Howard.

When I’m reading, I take notes. I underline as if I’m going to take a test, as if I need to remember the words and the plotline for some imagined high stakes. I draw a star next to things that I love. I draw a heart near things that I love and make me feel fluffed up. I write “hmm” if there’s something I question or disagree with (the number of m’s indicates the amount of disagreement). I also box unknown words or names with an added “LU” off to the side as a reminder to (L)ook (U)p. I love a book that directs me to others, and this one didn’t disappoint. You can tell that Miller loves books. At one point she describes her desert island being a room with Mozart playing and some books. She is a voracious reader. (Why is *voracious* always in front of *reader*?) And as one, she pulls from multiple sources, usually within some literary arena. She talks of being flabbergasted talking to Norman Mailer at a book signing, going to a late book release of John Barth, talking to Cormac McCarthy on the phone (for some reason I only imagine him in his garden growing artichokes). As the Fiction Editor of *Esquire*, Miller is stepping into the driver’s seat warmed by Gordon Lish and Rust Hills (married to the wonderful Joy Williams), and at one point she asks, where did the history go? There’s a motif of an early infographic “galaxy” of the literary world mapped by Hills in 1963 and again in the 90s, where he located different (most definitely mostly) MALE AND WHITE authors and their impact on the American landscape of words. Even though the relic is an obvious symbol of the power structures of white heteronormative patriarchy, Miller is

<p>“the stories were hammer-and-nail stories and their authors were trying to build solid realist houses.”</p> <p>“Although each writer certainly presents his or her own unique editorial situation, most fiction writers tend toward the avoidant personality type--no, correction: what you get more often than not with fiction writers is a self-canceling combination of avoidant and hustler”</p> <p>“It was so depressing, he said, how he viewed most of his adult life as an effort to escape the misery of his late adolescence.”</p> <p>“I had been hoping that power was the way to undo fear. But then you learn: the fear is here to stay.”</p> <p>“It really is so true that editors need to be people of enormous faith.”</p> <p>“My preference was for him to deal with his sexism himself so I wouldn’t have to.”</p> <p>“And you’d better have an unshakable moral core if you always get what you want--otherwise what, exactly, is the incentive to behave decently?”</p> <p>“why appreciation is important: it’s the only thing that can triumph over the abyss.”</p> <p>“Why even get up in the morning if we’re stuck with who we were yesterday?”</p> <p>“All we ever have of other people are their shadows. Their truth--who they are--is merely glanced at, groped at. No one ever comes into clear focus.”</p>	<p>also clear on <i>Esquire’s</i> history and impact on history and is interested in the stories behind these stories. What was it like hashing out edits with Tom Wolfe? Who was Nabakov mad at? Has anyone ever really <i>met</i> J.D. Salinger? She wants to know! As do I! And she delivers, talking shop with the lobster man himself, which to some is reason enough to pick this one up. Throughout her memoir, Miller delicately questions the art:person::person:person dilemma, particularly w/r/t one “bad” man. Her idea is that we’re all hiding and hidden and have broken parts that can cut others and we do and we don’t apologize when we bump into or tackle others and we do or don’t continue to heal and humans are weird and time erases all things. You should know that I preordered <i>The Pale King</i>. That I took a DFW class in grad school with joy. I haven’t read it all, but I’ve read a lot of it, going so far as to get the <i>Oxford American Writer’s Thesaurus</i>. And then, there was the new meaning of <i>reading it all</i>, Mary Karr as the intro-101-author. Reading Miller’s story of their relationship and then reading Amy McDaniel’s excellent essay of her writerly relationship with him, it made me want to reexamine the vestiges of my attachment to the author. But then I thought, won’t doing that just reamplify the man for me? Keep him in my spotlight? The classic, I’m a bad person so let’s focus all attention on fixing me, keep looking at me, tactic--as if we can just tighten a screw or reapply a coat of paint. So instead I want to celebrate Miller’s perseverance in the face of a worldview that was built against her. I want to tell you about how when she talks of her deep reads of her assignments at the magazine, her scope is Midwestern plains wide and her knowledge is Great Lakes’ plumbing depths. I loved reading her talk about what a writer could do to lift up a work to a new place, even if it was as small as a space between yoyo. And I want to celebrate Lucy K Shaw as the editor of this here digital glossy. I want to celebrate her continued joining and remaking of community through genius and interest, letters and paint strokes. Let’s please shake Lucy’s hand today and all days as she continues screaming at the sunset and appreciating the world.</p>
<p><u>Weather</u> by Jenny Offill</p> <p>“What it means to be a good person, a moral person, is calculated differently in times of crisis than in ordinary circumstances”</p> <p>“He said that it is important when a loved one dies to try to stay alone in the house for three days. This is when the manifestations occur. His wife manifested as a small whirlwind that swept papers off his desk. Marvelous, marvelous, he said.”</p>	<p>If you go to the end of this book, and maybe if you just know, there’s an unlinkable typed out url to www.obligatorynoteofhope.com -- Offill’s page of resources for those who feel the edge of climate/global pandemics. If you go Tip #3 of Tips for Trying Times, it’s a quote from Thomas Merton. I don’t know, but sometimes it feels like all things are linked; case in point, my friend, R, posted a bunch of pics of Merton on her stories and he was quite a hunk in his two-toned habit! His quote includes, “I myself am part of the weather,” and I can’t help but adore this idea. Offill’s</p>

“There is a heroic tower of folded things on the table. I spot my favorite shirt, my least depressing underwear. I go into the bedroom and change into them. Now I am a brand-new person.”

“But how to categorize this elderly gentleman who keeps asking me to give him the password for his own email.”

“They tested worms in the city sewers and found they contained high concentrations of Paxil and Prozac.

When birds ate these worms, they stayed closer to home, made more elaborate nests, but appeared unmotivated to mate. ‘But were they happier?’ I asked him. ‘Did they get more done in a given day?’”

“My brother told me once that he missed drugs because they made the world stop calling to him. Fair enough, I said.”

“He was just a kid, so I let it go. And now, years later, I probably only think of it, I don’t know, once or twice a day.”

“Hard to believe that isn’t joy, the way it flies away when I fling it out the window.”

“Swept up, they called it. As if God were a broom.”

“He explains that current technology will no longer seem strange when the generation who didn’t grow up with it finally ages out of the conversation. Dies, I think he means.”

“These people long for immortality but can’t wait ten minutes for a cup of coffee.”

“I think of the time Sylvia interviewed that famous futurist. She asked him what was coming next, and he repeated his best-known prediction: *Old people, in big cities, afraid of the sky.*”

“*When three people say you are drunk, go to sleep.*”

“Sylvia always wants to go see things, some nearby, some far away. The requirement is that they are disappearing faster than expected. The going, going, gone trips, I call them.”

“I had a baby in this shitty hospital too. There’s that *ding, ding, ding* as you go down the hallways, all those machines conducting their business. Even the buzzing of these awful lights is stored somewhere deep in my body.”

“No more apples soon; apples need frost.”

“I wanted every day to be like this, to begin in shame and fear and end in glorious reassurance.”

novel, well, it sure does capture something about the global and personal changing weather patterns. To be honest, it reminds me of Rebecca Solnit’s idea of time, and how hard it is to be aware of it because of our closeness to it. Weather acts in the reverse, (or maybe the exact same): It’s so easy to look out or go out and experience the current weather. But the larger scale trends, if not the seasons, can be hard to see until it’s all we see. My other friend, K (your thesis! done!), who happens to live with the previously mentioned friend, described this book as “a narrative with macro tensions that are only obliquely referenced,” which is so great and also applies to how we all exist these days. The narrator is a librarian with an oscillating scope of problems compounded by her need to know and to help. Her brother struggles. Her mother struggles. Her husband and son are pretty good in their own right, but ultimately are affected by how much she worries about her brother and the world writ large. She notices the unflattering global ultimatums learned while pouring over survivalist websites and answering emails for her old professor which usually tend toward apocalypse betting. Which begs the question, how do we square getting ice cream at midnight from the corner store while understanding that the world is this close to collapse? Even though I don’t remember everything about her last book, *Dept. of Speculation*, there’s the familiar territory of the marital home. Who cleans the mouse droppings? Who takes the child to the overcrowded school? Who notices the mail piling up? Who *picks up* the mail? One of my favorite passages is when the narrator is contemplating an affair, the inevitable up and the gravitational down of making any decision. I wonder sometimes about this same logical tallying when thinking about vegetarianism or buying books online instead of in person. How do we decide? When do we decide to decide? She decides to keep the relationship on this side of the physical, but there is an emotional connection via communication continued, the desire to be constantly validated through texts and talks. He leaves, she continues. Maybe it’s the terseness of the prose combined with the star-fish tendrils of quotes and thoughts interspersed, but I feel like there are so many connections/extensions/feelings to have about this book. There’s one point where the meditation teacher equates suffering to pain plus resistance. In *Self-Compassion*, the equation is suffering equals pain multiplied by resistance, or even pain to the exponent of resistance. How quickly can we get change-- if by change, we mean get bigger? The way these equations are laid out, the point is that suffering is the foregone conclusion. Pain is the given. The only element within our control is resistance. But if this was a math class, I’d ask you to see what happens when you move things around. Get creative. Which is better?

“And then it was another day and another and another, but I will not go on about this because no doubt you too have experienced time.”

“The thought of having to be with someone else long enough to deserve it again. That’s what feels impossible. Because the part where they are charmed by you, where you are every good thing, and then the part later -- sooner, maybe, but always later -- where they tire of you, of all your repetitions, of all your little and big shames, I don’t think I could bear that.”

“Later, I take Eli to the new dollar store to get a plastic colander. He runs up and down the aisle ecstatically. ‘Who made all these things?’ he asks me. ‘The Invisible Hand,’ I tell him.”

“When I look at a tree or a bird, I can see the air around it”

“It’s raining. The bus is full. It’s reached that density where being seated feels like a form of guilt. I look around. I will grudgingly stand for the infirm and the pregnant and those with children. But miraculously, it is all able-bodied teenagers with earbuds.”

“‘Do you really think you could protect them? In 2047?’ Sylvia asks. I look at her. Because until this moment, I did, I did somehow think this. She orders another drink. ‘Then become rich, very, very rich,’ she says in a tight voice.”

“*A time is coming when men will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack him, saying ‘You are mad, you are not like us.’*”

“‘How do you know all this?’
‘I’m a fucking librarian.’”

Suffering minus pain = resistance? Suffering minus resistance equals pain? Divide suffering by pain and you get resistance. The logarithm of suffering base pain is equal to resistance. Does that mean anything to you? To swerve away from math for a bit, one smaller part that I related to was her occupation as a renegade librarian at some university. She doesn’t have any applicable degree; instead, she got the job through her professor, much like Adrienne Miller got her first job at *GQ*. There’s quite a few sections of *In The Land of Men* when Miller talks about how her majority male coworkers questioned her credibility to do her job. How people she met at parties credulously asked how she could have possibly landed her job. How writers would try to bypass her role as editor with her edits. Miller wrestles with the questions, “Why am I here?” and “Am I good enough?” The narrator in *Weather* doesn’t go through the same existential work destruction derby, but she does mention a co-worker not liking her because she lacks the proper education for the job. I was talking to my partner about this, how I remember feeling like I was a *feral* librarian. My partner said, cool, that’s what it’s like in a female body all the time, especially after walking into a room full of men. That instantaneous feeling of being discredited, defined as seemingly without whatever is needed for the most pressing problem so therefore at best auxiliary. The narrator doesn’t hover too long on it. As a subtle rejoinder, she describes this coworker as always carrying an x-ray, as if a captured object could ever represent the fullness of one’s insides, and I like that.

That's all for this week!

Thank you so much for reading!!



We'll be back next Sunday with a new issue.

Don't forget to
[follow us on instagram](#)
if you want to!

And if you want to contribute something to next week's issue...

Email me: lkshowbiz@gmail.com

I'm a little behind this week, but I will respond very soon :)

Thank you for sending things and being patient.

Stay safe!!!



Apr 26, 2020
Issue 2
A profound experience of staying at home

