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DICHOTOMY

Spencer Wells

having read the book
in part, mostly understood
i saw the woes of my friends and family
tearing themselves apart in the ere of vengeance,
growing older, with youthful intent in some
though hardly anything to show for most.
i love them. still do, even if its hard
isn't that the point, though? continuity,
persistence, integrity. words softly spoken
more like codes if you will. not for the unwitting
you'll know when you see it, too. i believe in you
take your time with life if you please. the rush is over
and paint doesn't dry very quickly if you stare at it
the wrinkles on my hand start to mesh
as the grime of a hard days work
sees the youthful colors plainly fade to grey
although the fine gears in that clock by the doorframe
give away the slightest buzzing, a petty annoyance at first
is nicer to hear than the yells, and thoughts in my head, psyche
that offer up more transgressions, doubts that cast long shadows
sudden changes in moods. no need for consultation, i believe
a lack of judgement altogether would be the mature response
and lately, my thoughts have turned to wavelengths
there's no linearity, in case that wasn't clear
hell, is anything clear anymore?
who knows?
maybe...

...
..
.

a task that i couldn't've taken lightly given the lack of time on hand
though i gave it my best effort at the time
in the tides of whimsical, collective frustration
aren't we all doomed to something similar?
we were reprimanded long ago for such
in barren lands we are the colors
if only they knew
respect is reciprocal. that's what i was taught
in hallways, crowded rooms with empty minds
though many saw the forms, few took on the challenge
ill have no other choice
had i known this sooner, id have been more alive
though the world isn't always in motion
imagine, in my youth, i sought for long life
a privilege – so to speak
facetious, given i was born in a void
who how long its been there?
harmonies aren't always ubiquitous, nor sweet
whatever's left of it
a compliment, and a break from spontaneity
you'll be fine after a nice cup of chamomile
i was coerced by the other half of my mind
the science of which i've yet to understand
only if you look very, very closely
this is where it ends.

HAZARD

Kavya Chandra

this calamity isn't a fruit of the bourgeoisie
it is the mistake of the common man
why did we ask for a king when
we didn't wish to part with our land
 we never lock the doors at night
 knowing that even the robbers can
 tell the three empty rooms are
 filled with ghosts of tribulation
this glass will never fill up
the quiet ends of your feet will
push cement onto the pedestal
the king will live on forever at your mercy
 we never wash our hands after eating
 hoping the smell of dignity slithers
 onto the dead & so when we forget them
 at least it felt like home like safe





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HUNGER IN THE HEAVY HEAT

Shaun Phuah

Heavy heat in the orange evening, hot enough to bend the white walls of homes off in the distance, sunlight boring through the scalp making us feel delirious, sticky sweat clinging to my armpits and drying into a crust, and Mahram is smoking a cigarette and watching the cops down the street playing volleyball with the local junkie's severed head.

The cops are all in their blue swimsuits and rosy red cheeks, laughing as they toss Paul's head around, tongue out and eyes constantly rolling, they sip beers and I'm pretty sure I'm even seeing one in the distance with a portable grill and some ribs.

Mahram's got a new cigarette between his lips, "Man... honestly, that one cop in the back, looks like he's cooking up something good. Hope it's giving you an appetite."

The smell wafts over with the wind every now and again and I can smell the spices and rubs caramelizing on the pork.

Mahram takes a long drag of his cigarette and I ignore what he said, "you think they're gonna start getting bothered by us staring?" I ask.

"Just wait, I'm already seeing some of 'em looking over at us."

One of the cops slams his knuckles down on Paul's flying temple, and his head goes back over the net and down into the sand faster than anyone can react.

"Whoa! Damn!" One of the cops yells, laughing, "you ever thought of trying out for a team or something?"

"Dad used to want me to join the Olympics actually."

"No shit!"

Another one chimes in, "I actually got pretty far into the whole process actually."

"What you mean you nearly performed in the actual games?"

"Yeah! Couldn't quite cut it though."

Hunger in the Heavy Heat



“Bullllshit. They’d take one look at you and start laughing. What sorta sport you do?”

“Swimming...”

Some of ‘em laugh, “Michael, you’d look like a fuckin’ pregnant Bill Burr in a leotard if they ever tried putting you in a swim-suit.”

Michael frowns and his eyes catch ours staring at him and his friends, the two of us sitting on a concrete wall and watching them and the ocean waves in the distance, orange under the setting sun and full of sea-foam and sea-oak.

Micahel looks at his buddies, talks to them and starts pointing over at us, and soon enough all the volleyball playing cops are throwing looks our way, and still, we’re staring at them.

Mahram’s still smoking his cigarette, almost down to the butt now, he believes there’s wisdom in consumption. And I believe it too, but he’s got faith, and he’s watching these police cooking on the grill intently, barely blinking.

“What d’you think these cops do when they get home? I mean food-wise.”

“I don’t know. Microwave dinners I’m guessing.”

“I think they don’t care. I think they sit by themselves and drool.”

“What d’you mean?”

Hunger in the Heavy Heat

“Look at ‘em now. They’re starting to eat.”

And Mahram’s right, grill-cop’s got paper plates and is handing ribs out to all the other cops, and now they start to dig in.

Mouths wide open as they chew into soft meat and having the juices and spit spill through their open lips to pool yet again on their plates or on the floor, mixing with the sand and clumping the sediment together.

Meat jumps from their mouths as they talk and laugh among one another, chunky sauce glazing their mouths and glistening in the sunlight.

More of their eyes catch us staring at them, and they start muttering amongst each other as they stare back.

Five days now they’ve been playing with Paul’s head, and we’d all been friends. Paul was a good simple guy who did too much meth, but still, he was nice, trying to quit glass and failing each time ‘till we stopped hearing from him one day, and then one evening I get a call from Mahram and he’s crying and telling me they’re playing volleyball with Paul’s head, and we came out to the beach here and saw them bouncing Paul’s head all over the court, eyes rolling and rolling and rolling, the whole time Mahram was standing next to me, shaking with anger in the evening sun.

We’re staring at them, trying not to blink and finally, one of them tosses their half-finished rib away and walks towards us, prompting the rest of them to follow a few steps behind.

“Walk away,” one of the cops says, “nothing to see here.”

“Just watching you play volleyball,” Mahram says, “what’s wrong with that?”

“Move along.”

One of the cops behind the main one, face turning red behind his aviators and shaking yells, “He’s watching us, Cole! Look! He’s watching us!”

Another cop comes up behind this cop sweating and shaking and puts an arm around him, “Ned! Ned! Hey, shhh it’s okay man, it’s okay.”

Ned breaks down and starts sobbing into the cop’s shoulder. The other cop cradles Ned in his arms, stares up at Cole and says, “fix this.”

The two of them walk off the volleyball court and onto a bench in the distance where Ned the cop continues sobbing and rubbing his eyes, big globs flowing down flushed cheeks.

Hunger in the Heavy Heat

Cole the main cop turns back and puts his hand on the grip of his taser, "leave now."

"We can watch you people if that's what we wanna do," I say.

"You fucking killed Paul," Mahram says, "where'd his body go?"

"There was no body."

"Oh! So what, you just found his head?"

"Listen... we're just out here minding our business so why don't you just go and-"

"You ate him!" I say, "hid his body in your bellies."

The cop pulls his taser out and points it at us, "walk away now. Last warning."

Taser in my face and I'm imagining those prongs digging into the skin and I look at Mahram and he nods and I know what needs to be done.

I grab Mahram's arm, pull his sleeve back, revealing the skinny arm beneath, and I open my mouth as wide as it will go, and bite down on his flesh as hard as I can, taking out a massive bite in his forearm.

Big iron taste in my mouth full of salt and Mahram barely reacts and the cop Cole in front of me watches completely entranced, still pointing his taser at us, he's watching us and drooling at the sight of this consumption.

Some cops behind him are starting to freak now, "What the FUCK?! SHOOT him!"

"Is he eating his fucking friend?!"

"Shoot the bastard, Cole! What the fuck are you doing standing there?!"

And more cops headed towards us now, faces full of panic and with their tasers up, some of them watching Cole's entranced reaction, not looking away from my full chewing mouth. I take another massive bite of Mahram's forearm leaving now two gigantic bite marks that go all the way down to the bone, and cop Cole finally snaps out of his trance and shoots the taser right at my chest, and it's nothing but white light in my body and my arms shooting down to their sides and everything in my body tensing up with nothing but white light and white heat going up and down setting me on fire with their anger, and the next thing I know they've got my arms handcuffed behind my back, and I'm looking around and seeing Mahram on the ground too, two massive bite-marks in his arms, bleeding bad and they're handcuffing him, and I watch Cole's face and see nothing but hunger.



MENTAL HEALTH AND QUARANTINE

Paige Emms

Quarantine. That is definitely not the word I was expecting to use to describe the end of my first year in university. To be honest, I don't think anyone expected the school year to be cut short or to lose part of the summer. However, social distancing and isolation have seemingly been the best option to prevent more people from getting sick. Eventually, these measures will also help us get our societies back to normal as we would like to call it. Although, being in isolation with only my family for so long has caused a few issues for me.

Now, I don't mean that to sound as if my family is horrible or being in my house is miserable. It has actually been really nice to be home after being away for school. I am talking about issues, mentally. Mental health is something I have struggled with a lot in the past and present. I often experience waves of time where I feel worse than others, which I think is pretty typical for many people. So, being isolated has just added to the struggle I was already experiencing prior to quarantine. Having my friends to rely on when I am in a tough place really helps me to pull myself out of it. They encourage me to at least complete my basic day to day tasks if that is all I can do that day. Needless to say, quarantine has made that a lot more difficult.

Over the time I have spent away from my friends, I have truly realized how important they are to my happiness. Now, that could be a bad thing, but I like to think that I rely on them to be my sounding boards. Talking over the phone or on a video call just is not the same as hugging my friends or jamming out to music while we go to coffee. Any other seemingly frivolous activity that we used to think of as no big deal, no longer seems so miniscule. Right now, I cannot wait until the day that I can drive to my favourite coffee shop in the country and walk around town with my friends.

While I love being with my friends, having time to be by myself has been really important to me in the last year or so. Maybe it offsets the reliance on friends? I am not really sure but during quarantine, time alone has been complicated. The fact that I am stuck in my house with 4 other people does not make thinking time, easy. Not that we are cramped together, but being able to have silence if I need it has been really hard. I like to be able to decompress and have some time to be just on my own with no distractions. Well, I want to have distractions such as reading or watching a movie but not the distractions of other people and their activities.

Mental Health and Quarantine

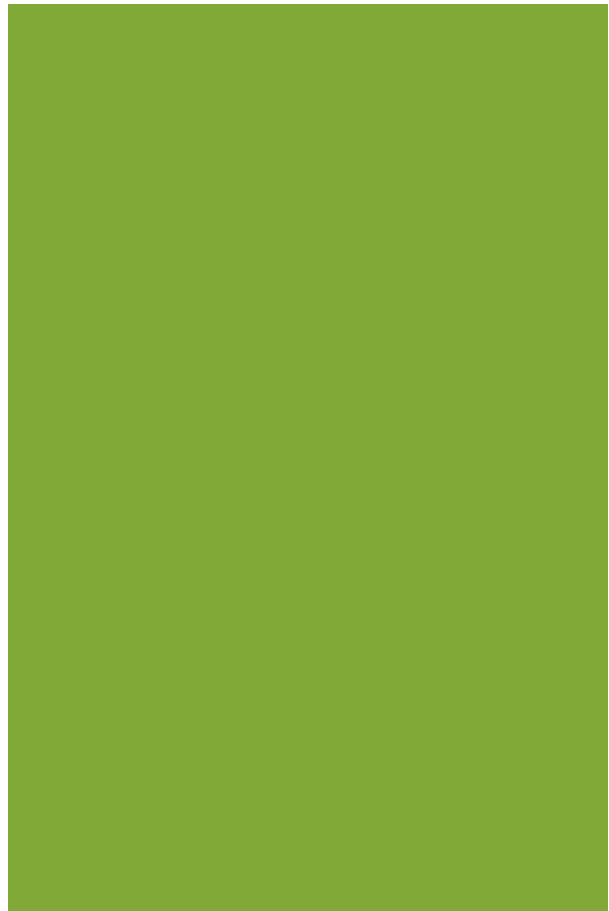
I can only imagine the impacts that the isolation has had on those who are in worse positions than I am. Although at times, the amount of resources discussing the impacts of quarantine and isolation as well as giving tips, have been overwhelming.

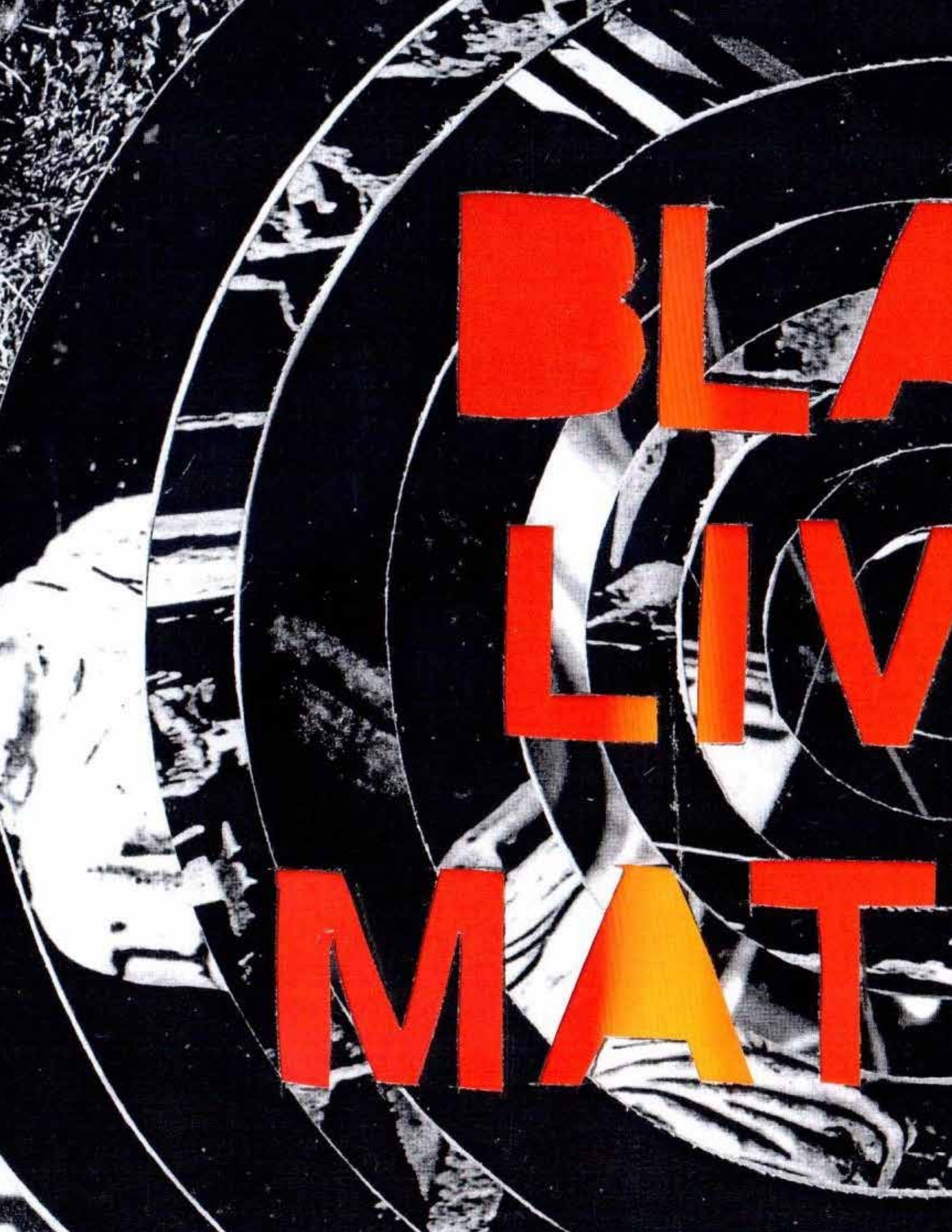
At this point in quarantine, things are beginning to open back up with many rules but my family is still being really cautious. However, some families and individuals are not taking it seriously at all anymore. Sometimes when I go out to the grocery store, it doesn't even look like there has been any issue at all. Seeing those scenes does not keep my anxiety low when it comes to worrying about my health and my family's. Although, depending on how I am feeling, it gives me a bit of hope that life might go back to the previous norm soon.

Now that Trent students know that most of the classes are online for the first semester this year, the unknowns definitely concern me. I cannot help but wonder when we will be able to go back to regular class sizes, or eating in the cafeterias. Simply being able to walk around our campus might not be an option for a while. I am just not sure how I am supposed to feel, but I think many people are anxious and scared too and I think that is okay.

All that thinking cannot be good for keeping my mental health in check. Keeping things in perspective and carving out some time to take care of what I need is helpful. If I am honest with myself, although quarantine has been incredibly difficult for me, I think I have learned a lot about myself and I have certainly been reminded never to take simple moments for granted.

So in a way, maybe the isolation has given me a new outlook on how I let my life pass me by without truly appreciating it. I am a firm believer that everything happens for a reason, or I try to be. Keeping that in mind, I think that there must be a lesson that I am supposed to learn out of all of this. Maybe the isolation, while definitely difficult for many people, has a purpose for every person. While I don't think I have found the full purpose intended for me, I am trying to stay positive and look only forward. Staying in the moment will be very important for me after quarantine, but right now I have to look beyond where we are. One thing I know for sure is that I will never again get iced coffee with a friend, and not acknowledge the moment.






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IN THE ABSENCE OF INCENTIVE

Spencer Wells

I.

if anything, i've gotten used to the feeling,
the word "empty" – its been there
the summer was spent in limbo, midnight strikes
its still happening, i can't say for sure
when exactly it will end
my hair becomes tangled more often now
its long, natural, and disheveled tones of brown
the older folks hate it, at least the ones that knew me
for much longer a time
but i think its better this way
a contest between a clean shave
such as i have been known for
since i was little and influenced
donning my casual clothes, the coffee tastes sour
boots bought long ago,
still dented at the bottom
never have they seen better days
the night and morning mesh between ungodly hours
and i have to venture off into the corridors
work, work, work always
even the drive feels off. thoughts invade:
the streets are unwelcoming, though vacant
someone lurks, maybe my better judgement
the store will open soon, get busy
until i feel tired at the crack of daylight
the wretched music that writhes
in its own saturation
it never stops. oh what bother
only the crackling of the boxes we handle
and every so often, the bare skin dries with contact
cardboard is just as sharp as razor blades
it reminds me of what i must do.

In the Absence of Incentive

II.

it gets hot near the front door
when i get to greet the customers as i walk out
and that brightness, the wholesome sun
its wonderful when i'm not aching
and wondering what to do with the rest of the day
hmmm, daytime. it only occurred to me
that now the breaths of life are no longer shallow
and even the cars that zip and zoom by
seem to have a purpose just like me
or maybe... ah forget it
i'm wasting my time with all of this
but lately it seems that time is all i have
a different kind, though hard to explain
it crosses over and winds around
with the radiance of warm light on my forehead
and the cool breeze of a fan at night
this is nothing more than a memory
now the bus stop is an exhibition
a boy on his way to become a man
watching life pass him in brisk strides
awake when the world is asleep
yet never fully noticed within the glints
that the morning sun seems to reflect
to the car windows, and even our own eyes
i spoke to him in confidence:
"the news isn't any different
faults, plenty. accountability seldom
what to do next, i plot more often
speaking to those who will listen
harshly reminiscing on the images
perhaps they saw them too
and to hide behind their veils
of fear and misunderstanding
is nothing short of a testament
to a troubled history of inaction, grotesque
let it be known for what it deserves
we are on a track to change the airs of history
solidarity takes upon a new sense of fruition
this must happen
cursed phantoms must topple, hexes, hatred too"
with grit comes resentment
the bus approaches, empty seats
and now the world returns to normal
whatever that may be, or once was.

In the Absence of Incentive

III.

my heart is heavy for those lost
may they never be forgotten



FIRES

Julie Musclow



George Floyd Philando Castile Atatiana Jefferson
Eric Garner Freddie Gray Dominique Fells
Walter Scott Stephon Clark Breonna Taylor
Jordan Edwards Riah Milton

Michael Brown I would start fires too if my voice was mocked
If those around me ridiculed me continuously and never stopped

Akai Gurley I would start fires too if I kneeled in peace and you tackled me
and my friends in the streets. You're supposed to protect us you
Botham Jean so called "police".

Tamir Rice I would start fires too if I was enslaved for the colour of my skin.
Ahmaud Arbery Since when was being born black or brown a sin?

Tony McDade I would start fires too if my brothers and sisters were under attack
If their conviction was for being brown or black
This country needs systematic change to get on track.

I would start fires too if my land was taken and belongings sold
If I was left for cold while those of privilege struck gold.

I would start fires too if I was constantly discriminated. If I was the
one people wrongly hated. If I was at war with the racism created.

I would start fires too if I lived in constant fear that maybe this
year I'd be the one to disappear.

I will start fires to make a systematic change
Watch out world you're about to be rearranged

Black Lives Matter! Say

Their Names!



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SAD MOM

Melchior Dudley

Washing dishes
My mother
complaining in the background

I'm angry
I need my space
I feel trapped
I ignore her like I always do
Because it only makes me frustrated to
listen

I focus on the suds
until she starts to cry
I don't even bother
To look over
And the screen door bangs
She's gone

I watch her through the kitchen window
Sobbing she walks towards the campfire
I wish my brother was here to go after her
And give her a hug
Because his tolerance is so much higher
than mine
And they love each other more

I haven't hugged her in months
Partly because my brother always does it
when she needs it
Partly because I don't want to accept her
weakness
And somewhat because I envy her ability
to let it out
I feel like crying every day but I can't
I trained myself that way

Struck with a once in a lifetime occur-
rence - Compassion for my mother -
I follow her to the fire and hug her

It's okay, I say

Sobbing, she tells me it would be easier to
be dead
No, no, I say,
Even though I'm often lured by the same
thoughts

I feel like a complete failure, she sniffles
I reject this also,
Because telling her I feel the same way
wouldn't help anything

In all my relationships, she adds
I say no again, and I worry she'll notice the
lack of confidence in my voice
But she doesn't

What have I accomplished? She asks
My sorrow sinks further
Though I tell her to look around at the
lovely house she has
Because I believe it's true
Even if it requires a stretch of the
imagination

With a new confidence
She talks about all of her plans for the
place
None of which will help her out of the fi-
nancial crisis she's in

Her optimism returns
Even though both of her sons are still
useless
Worn out by the historical cycles of her
behaviour to believe in a future

For a moment she forgets all that

Sad Mom

And babbles about landscaping projects
Which will never fulfill her mother's im-
possible expectations
Which will never sell the house

I wish I was a better person
More hopeful
Less distant

More forgiving
Less ego

In the end I still end up thinking about
myself more than mom
Even though at one time all she ever did
was think about me



I SAW IT TODAY

Melchior Dudley

from the passenger's seat
as we turned right on the top of a hill.
a car to the left, unseen by my driver
who pulled us into the lane.

nothing flashed before my eyes

as the car narrowly missed us
and we crept away,
my driver breathing relief,
though we had averted it
i felt more dead than ever

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VENIENS

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A PHOTOGRAPH

Kavya Chandra

a boy glaze on this burnt cheek
ropes around the wrists
freckles on skin like confetti
at a parade
swift walks in the afterbirth

sun yellowing past the creaky
steps
meek cigarette households
DAVID'S TEA in the coconut milk—
some chef

jungle in the back room like
adventure has a limit to it
paper dolls on window sills
lined with black blood:

carpet with seams pulled apart like
two knights used it as a sheath
swift cuts
tangerine thread
broken promises—

a dangerous expedition
this dark room some ghost
builds a home in red
like the newly-wed's lost ring an
unsettling commodity
as the cat crawls into
the washing machine
just as you hit play

there is nothing of worth
in the soft embrace when
the burning
heart demands more
than simple love



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