

Quarantine

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This is the part of quarantine where nobody is leaving. It's a March that feels like December— deep ruts of fog spilling across the valley, and the trees all stand naked, caught like confused specters in the daylight. Here, I walk the property line with the dogs as the dusk fuses to darkness. It is still too cold for frogs, and I listen to the quiet, wondering about what comes next. Last week I was standing in a club in Seattle, nudging a twisted can of soda as it skittered across the dirtied tile of the bathroom floor. Last week I sat in my afternoon class, staring out at the winter sun as it caught on the Admin lawn at 3pm, fragmenting on the buildings, skipping across Elliot Bay and West Seattle before sliding behind the Olympics. Today I am in my childhood home, a strange intermission. The dusk chill settles into the parts of my neck that are unprotected by layers, and I let it.

This is the part of quarantine where nobody is leaving. I start to jog the road my house sits on once, twice a day. There's no denying it: it's ugly. The parkway pushes past the rural parts of Ashland and eventually becomes Main Street, but I run it where it's still peppered with farms, where broad stretches of sky reveal mountains on both sides, where construction plots bloom like flowers. I watch a unit of micro-housing go from bones to structures to homes, people moving inside them like bees. I know this street intimately by the time I move back up to Seattle. Several times, on accident, I open my phone camera and take photos when I think I am turning up my music, creating a surreal collage of movement and the way a space transforms at different points

during the day. I can't bring myself to delete them. Contained within their canted angle is such a surprising memory of peace, I can't part with it.

This is the part of quarantine where nobody is leaving. I watch the field outside my window go from late winter crocuses to plum blossoms to rhododendrons, measure the days that pass by how long my cat naps in the sunbeam on the concrete, notice how my layers get fewer and fewer until suddenly I am not wearing any at all. I have never observed time move in a way like this. It feels like the science we did in middle school, making a glue of cornstarch and water— if I press it too hard it is still, unmoving, breaking under my fingers where I push up against it. But if I let it sit in my hands it falls through my fingers like water, coming down in soft, fat drops, shimmering in the bowl when I move it.

This is the part of quarantine where nobody is leaving. There is another road I like to jog— my family has been walking it since I was young, and although the street has a name, we've always called it Gun Club because of its proximity to a shooting range. The road is four miles set between wineries, mansions, farms, and mounds of dirt with targets in front of them. The juxtaposition is jarring, but only if you've never seen it before. From here I watch mustard-colored flowers bloom from the roadside, watch poppies in shades of purple and pink and orange and red flare up from the ditch beside the road. I run this route in the hours before sunset, my shadow stretching long like a sentinel beside me, the cows all turning their heads to watch me as I slowly move past. Even with the constant gunfire it's my footfall that they notice. You will get used to anything eventually.

This is the part before 'quarantine' has entered our vocabulary, the day before I move back to Oregon, the day before it ends (or begins.) I stand on a street in Seattle and everyone moves around me, on bikes and on foot and in car and in their own world, no masks. The sun

pushes down on a bluebird late February day, and although the air is cold, there is a misplaced warmth to it. I stand in the street, the only thing still in a web of things that are moving, and wonder if the day will hold some special significance later on. (It will.)