

Fire/Ice/Bang/Whimper

By

Sam Bible-Sullivan

Reminder about Investor Liquidation Process

Hello!

As you know, the world is rapidly falling apart around us. The American enterprise has nearly collapsed, and many of the other geopolitical powers of the world are following suit. However, lucky for you, you were able to profit off of the enterprise before it went belly up, and now you will be able to exist in a post-capitalist world. Congratulations!

We're sure you're curious about what your investment in our technology provides to you. Allow us to explain the exciting, new chapter of your life you're about to begin!

You are about to embark on the ultra-exclusive, revolutionary, Suc-Ka Corp consciousness liquidation process™. First, let's define consciousness.

Merriam-Webster defines consciousness as, "the state of being characterized by sensation, emotion, volition, and thought." In simpler terms, your consciousness is what makes you, you! Due to our hardworking researchers, and our visionary leader, Gerald Pinkerton, Suc-Ka Corp has developed a method that allows us to remove the water from the human body and place the human consciousness inside of it.

Let's list the steps of the process:

1. Extract all water from your body*
2. Stabilize the water with our unique, FogBody™ technology
 - a. This will allow you to have all of your previous movement capabilities and then some!
 - b. This will also free you from the need of previous bodily functions, such as eating and drinking**, a freedom you'll want since food and water will be hard to acquire in a post-capitalist world.
3. Separate your consciousness from your brain***
4. Implant consciousness into FogBody™
5. Enjoy your new, no worries lifestyle!

Curious about where your leftovers go?

Don't worry! Your body and brain will be given to the proper authority.

If you have any further questions about the process, you can call the customer service number on the information card included with your gift basket. This information card will also list your liquidation appointment date and time.

Thank you for choosing Suc-Ka Corp! We know we're the only company on the market to offer such a service, so we appreciate your patronage.

Enjoy your new, go with the flow life!

Sincerely,
The SKC Family

*Suc-Ka Corp is not responsible for traumatic injury that may occur

**Suc-Ka Corp is not responsible for psychological damage that may occur from erasing typical bodily function

***Suc-Ka Corp is not responsible for lost memories, lost cognitive processing ability, or lost ability to recognize reality

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An Author's Note

Where am I in all of this?
surrounded
by remnants of mildewed couch cushion.
The fragments of cloth and stuffing,
I'm amidst that. Obviously,
with no face.

I'm a tree now,
not very tall,
with a little hunch,
and I've got thorns
jutting from my skinny trunk;
I'm young. A sapling.

Also, sorry, I take back my previous statement;
I think I have a face.

But you'd have to squint,
and you'd probably think
it's just weird
light on the bark, and me
as a tree
wouldn't take this as a slight,

since everything seems to be dusk-lit now.
And the dusk seems to create and internalize light;
how do we make sense of this?
Any of it. This is why I'm a tree now.

When you're a tree, you
start at the end like everything
else as nothing, stretch
outward and upward
but what's best about a tree
is that's that,
being human means
a lack of that's that,
hoping something roots in your corpse
and grows out of you with purpose
makes sense if death is peaceful

and in this world, I'm dead,
you too, and everyone else.

But I want to err on the side of realism, not pessimism, so I'm saying

me

you

are now all trees

soaking up dusk-light

digging down into dirt.

Fog Folk

Then...

Long ago

we drew in air to live
but the air got slick from iron sweat
and since we boiled the iron
the air took revenge. It birthed
billions of children outside
of our sight that burrowed
into fluids to burst us.

The world began to flood with the burst.

So we searched

for someday to keep ourselves
from joining the flood.
We searched the sky-scrappers
the white houses
the underground hiding holes.
But too many were drowned
and we began to believe we were just the rest
but then the magicians found us.

In exchange

for our skin
and our papers
they dripped
us out
gave us sheen
that blinded the air
and its children long enough
for us to seep away.

We were blessed

with papers and skin valuable to magicians.
Most were cursed to burst.
Their numbers marked
by the bone bits.

Now...

In the morning

as pink and purple bleed from the night

we rise.

We mist up from the soil
 where we sleep amongst splatterings
 of mineral and bone

and we form our droplets
into sheen-skin
only perceptible
 to the eyes of cats on their ninth life
 and the noses of vocal dogs who bark
 at branch-swaying breezes.

We then collect
clean dew from grass blades
and replace beads in our skin
that have gathered any
 worm slime
 root rot
 ant carrion
 or various other dirt decay
with the grass'
crisper condensation.

Once we have rebeaded
we walk single
 file from our forest
 of hunch
 backed trees
taking care to note
knobbly roots and skeleton twigs
that mark the path back to our slumber spot.

We walk the same path
we've walked since The Evaporation.

We walk to the ruins.

Haiku on the Post-Apocalyptic Earthworm

spit out of the ground
a lazy birth, writhe and squirm
get stepped on by ash

Mist-Child at The Ruins

Little Drop
piddles their way
to the usual spot, an assortment of rubble
 green patched and dust cracked
 on this jagged moss cot
 a fluffed bear.

When Little Drop first found the bear
it had a few char patches
but all The Ruins have char patches. Sure
 that gets the beads gritty
 but a plush cub isn't ground scrap.
 It's meant to be a claimed thing.

But the Moon kept chasing the Sun
and all the damp attempts at play
sogged its fluff and fuzz away
leaving behind a mold-battered body.

Now they splash bugs and birds gone
or stand over it during downpours
slurping rain into themselves
until they're bloated and wobbly
or they just watch, almost remembering
a life with a bear without char or sog
 and most days that's plenty.

But today, the need
to hold feels too natural
for a little drop with hands
everything slips through.

Expiate

Each day, is a day
to soak deep, into soil
under the rocks on top,
so I can look up at the grubs
squirm-fly as if they're performing,
not just for me
but also for an audience of dusty stars.

I think today might
be a day where I swish to the grubs,
see if they drink from me.

An itch in me knows I am full of nutrients
to pass these on to little lifes feels like penance,

drink
of me cleanse me.

I might have been Greek.
The grubs could be

a boulder an apple
always out of reach
falling

either way I'm up to my neck in water
or in over my head.

I'll wander the asphodel meadows like they're purgatory,
that is what this is isn't it? purgatory

whatever that means.

The Mailbox

Fallen, dented, chipped paint
same color as the rust patches
pustulating its frame.

Used to be
painted a full coat of brick
to match the house behind it.

Used to be
stood straight on its post
mouth poised to take a message.

Used to be
a surname on its side
written in white baseball font.

Used to be
the name carried weight
with prada bootstrap americana.

Used to be
that name thought upright work
had earned it an upright mailbox.

Now, that name is just a couple of fog folk
who only know how to pine for a busted receptacle
that will hold nothing but bug carcasses
and assorted scat for the next few millennia,

and they will still stare at that beat steel box
every day for the next few millennia, knowing
whatever word weather wore down on its side
once gave them everything they'd ever known.

Stares at the Sun

bright

heat

circle

it is white and hidden behind
the gray above

I am r
i
s
i
n
g

little pieces of me

turning into ghost wisps

will I get them back?
will I get any of it back?

do I deserve to?

I did nothing

they came to me skin placid
they came to me eyes purple
they came to me mouths ajar

I did nothing

except close my gate
except call my guards
except tuck my kids away

my my my kids
I did nothing my kids
I did nothing I

bright

heat

circle

where are you taking me?

The Vengeful Worker's Soliloquy

None of us expected to live.
All of us drowning in our own mucus

we just wanted to have their lives
in our hands for the first time.

Most of the bastards had left
gone to their bunkers

or liquified themselves.
Classic money bullshit

preferring to live as a fragment
rather than risk confronting

the humanity they'd consumed
like sunflower seeds

couldn't risk us shells
coming back to cut their gums.

Those are the fucks
I wanted to put between my molars
and crack open real slow,
until my tongue
could scoop out all the meat.

Bet that shit would've tasted
like gold flakes on vanilla ice cream.

But you work with what you find
and we found an S class sinner

some silicon tech tyrant
living in some little prick McMansion.

We wore ski masks when we broke in;
the comfort of cliches dies hard.

We found him sleeping, face pale,
eyes purple, sick as the rest of us.

He looked like a boy waiting
for his mom to place a damp cloth
on his feverish forehead;
we almost stopped then.

But June didn't get to ease her son's fever,
his brain boiled while June worked to keep their house.
She came home to her dead child after a 12 hour shift.

So we pulled the piece of shit
out of bed, tied him to a chair

doused him in gas and spit
and lit him on fire.

We weren't sure he couldn't
pay his way out of hell
so we guaranteed he burned.

Haiku on the Post-Apocalyptic Sunset

the burned and bruised sky's
light mimics all it has seen
so it's grown gray wisps

Found Final Words

no breath

food gone

I think the rich ate themselves
just so we'd starve

no breath

head stomped

sometimes I feel a single raindrop
and swear I see their ghosts staring

stomach stomped

find my leg

no breathe

foodscarceskinny

sickwaterdntdrink

bleed

puked a kidney
slimy throat
milk in lungs

I don't know if the lights in that house up top
on the hill are real but they're keeping me awake

hell came
to claim the debtors
whose meat wasn't worth
the price of their loans

too many gators in the moat

gun clotted and blood jammed

bet on all the wrong hands
never thought a throat tickle would kill me
I don't think yawns bring oxygen to the brain

I miss you June I love you see you soon

An Apocalyptic Love Poem

They said the seas
were meant to rise

and all the fish
would drown

trapped on roofs
below the tides

rumbling
tumbling down;

they said the Sun
would aim at wings

and light aflame
each bird

or any unsus-
pecting thing

to make its word
more heard;

they said the frost
would send a scourge

to turn the breath
to chunks

to force the lungs
to hack and purge

'til in the dirt
they're dunked.

Well, my love, they said it all
and all did come to be

a steaming pile of recompense
for our atrocities

upon the earth,
 upon ourselves,
 from homely hearth
 to rancid hell,

well, my love, it sure does seem
my throat is filling up with steam
and here you lie right next to me
and soon I'll join eternally
but first I write this note to thee
written oh so formally
in hopes someday that one may read
and know that it was not all greed
that some of it was also us
with mugs filled up
with chocolate dust
with blankets on
and curtains drawn
my head upon your upper arm
a hapless sap upon the screen
in search of some elusive dream
with eyes that smart and teeth that beam,
our mouths that mock without mercy

Well, my love,
 I hope they see

 I hope they see

 I hope they see

Discarded

An empty pack of Newports
and a half eaten bag of fried shrimp
rot soggy in the rain
in a parking spot,
if a car were to park here,
they would be squashed,

but cars don't park anymore
people don't drive
people are bodies
that soggy rot
next to Newports
and old shrimp.

a revolutionary tune

slackjaw Jimmy went wal kin down the street
walkin down the street to the fac tory
and when he arrived
to his surprise
he saw that his job had met its demise.
gone toes up and was sunk in the ground
gobbled up by a moneybag downtown
had the face of Benny Frank
and oi-ul for blood
but Jimmy knew it-was for the greater good

hehad no coin
hehad no rice
hehad no pot
but hehad head lice

so slackjaw Jimmy went wal kin passed the point
walkin passed the point to a burger joint
got a job flippin patties for 7.25
7.25 to keepim alive
he needed more food than the boss would pay
so Jimmy had to go a little outta his way
he went right ahead and sold his blood
cause Jimmy knew it was for the greater good

hehad no coin
hehad no rice
hehad no pot
but hehad head lice

slackjaw Jimmy went wal kin out his mind
walkin out his mind to the fiive and dine
but as he stepped out to cross the road
a bus ran over all ten of his toes.
he crawled to the doctor and the doctor said
you don't got the money to afford a bed
so Jimmy gave his savings and the deed to his house
doctor said *that's for ya feet!* aand kicked him out.
Jimmy crawled in the street hisfeet leakin blood
but Jimmy knew it was for the greater good

hehad no coin

hehad no rice
hehad no pot
but aaaa

ll the big-bosses.

still-slept
at
night

Haiku on the Post-Apocalyptic Clouds

floating sky runoff
green-gray, chunked with soot and shit
wheezing by ground death

there's a desperate place in me
slack-jawed sucklin on air
so when the blank space above the lips
gets filled
it'll lap up whatever's poured down

that's how you found me
so i sold what you were sellin
sold it til my face felt
puffed up flushed scarlet
i flustered and flailed flappin
my lips

i think i believed in you
you're no fool
you just attract them

then when i gathered skins
for you i woulda done it till the world
was nothin but muscle and marrow
but i sold myself too

and now none of what i'm thinkin
makes any sense it's just a loop
with no knot to keep it from pulling through

The Man on the Top of the Hill

watched the breeze. pluck two yellow leaves
off. a branch. on the tree outside his window
and for a bit. of a moment he reached
to open the window
to take. that first crisp bite of autumn
to drain. its juices
to leave. it wrinkled and writhing
until it grew plump. again
waiting for his next taste.
but, he knew. the winds weren't for him
anymore. knew they could
glow with heat in a breath.
knew their teeth were filed. rusted metal.
meant to blister. and peel flesh.
meant to leave him. limp. and lock jawed.
ripe. ready to get gobbled
inside dry-bloody lips. gulped down
a gullet. filled with the scent
of pennies and paper mills
and- he knew. he'd started this death race.
between him and the leftover world
and- he knew. He deserved to lose.
but loss, was for the decomposing.
so he didn't. waste. this skin suit. so soon
and stopped his hands from flipping the latch.
and sat back. among the many pelts of his investors.
savoring the fact that he. was the only human. left with saved skin.

The Last Good Boy in all of Suburbia

He'd dug a hole
after the food in the bowl
was gone, after the mice

had cleaned the final
crumbs out of the bag
with the only face on it

he'd met but couldn't smell.
He'd needed somehow
to scavenge.

Territory old and new,
hadn't searched for scraps
since he'd left the first home

for the roadside
and got scooped and swaddled
by a second home.

But he'd still remembered
look for dead fur
that doesn't wriggle too much.

*Find the fur
carry it back
they'll want food to eat*

*they moved so fast
into the car
i barked*

*was that wrong?
did i scare them?
i'm sorry*

*i'll find extra squirrel
to make up for it
everyday i'll dig*

*a new hole for your meal
i'll dig deep so the ground*

*is soft and cold
when you come back
your food will taste like
it was in the shiny ice box*

*you love so much
 come back before
 the worms steal it all*

even a bunker won't save you/if you have lungs/if you have flesh

you know it's stale air underground?

stale air turns lung/flesh to cracklins/cookin in a wide fairground cauldron

how wide's that pot you bought?

won't cook you even/the air'll burn bits crisp/but the rest just marinates

you know you only bought time right?

bought plenty to stew in your sauces/stew till the dirt finishes the hunt

how tight's the lid on your pot?

don't really matter/soil critters always find a crevice/all they need's a sniff of what's simmerin

where'll you run when they crave a taste?

we all know the wind's blowing toxic and folks are startin to scramble over each other's backs to grab at a handhold on Maslow's base level and as truly horrid as your situation'll be you'll be food I mean have food so you're gonna end up throwing a dinner party for the riff raff that pressure cooker was supposed keep you above of but how can you stay above when you're literally below?

do you know how to seal that lid tight?

do you know how to keep a centipede
from wiggling in your ear?

do you know how to keep starving
fingernails from aiming at the mushy
parts of your gut?

nope/even a bunker won't save you/only way to save your skin/is to lose it/

we'll draw you out of your body/we'll give you immortality/

we'll make it so when life's necessities get scarce/they're not a necessity for your life anymore/
invest now.

Haiku on the Post-Apocalyptic Fog Folk

you chose all of this
so stand and piddle in dust
confused and longing

The Man in the Bottom of the Bunker: Part 1

I've stayed in my bunker

I've stayed and I've sat

I've stayed and I've sat and I've listened

to all of it tear and gnash and gut at itself out there

at first it was all clangs and bangs

loud but harmless palms and fists smacking and pounding on the lid

sealed screwed tight

so so so sosososo tight no fingers not even little baby nails could try to pry

I paid for the goodest of greatness and I paid to keep their grime and sloth away from my
hard earned clean pressed veneers and fresh caught alaskan sockeye
I paid for the meadow hanging on my wall and I will not feel guilty even though they
came to me for shelter

they got a drill

and they whirred at me

they made me jitter and quake

and they whirred at me

can't they read No Trespassing?

that's why they're out there filled with wheezes

they're rude

or were rude

I miss the screaming

it'd come in through the metal of the lid and shimmer and bounce around down the concrete
and make this whole bunker full and warm

now it's only these damp faces soaking out of the concrete

I wish they'd scream

but they just let their jaws hang

and their heads twist

they have no eyes but they still stare

so I try to etch them away

I've run out of forks and spoons and knives

I'm down to my nails

I've still got a couple left on my hands

and a full ten on my toes

and plenty of bones to sharpen

The Man in the Bottom of the Bunker: Part 2

scritch

scratch

scritch

scratch

scritch

scratch

scritch

scratch

scratch

scritch

scratch

scritch

scritch scratch scritch scratch scritch scratch

scritch

scratch

scritch

scratch scritch

scritch scratch

scratch

scritch

scratch

scritch

scratch

scratch

scratch

scratch

scratch

scraaaaaatch

scriiiiiitch

scratch scritch scratch

scritch scratch scritch scratch

scritch scratch scritch scratch scritch

scratch scritch scratch scritch scratch scritch

scratch scritch scratch scritch scratch scritch scritch scraaaaaatch scriiiiiitch scraaaaa

Haiku on the Post-Apocalyptic Mountain

who cares? the world has
ended before and you still
have trees on your hips

Last Letter

To the light of my life,
if you're reading this, I love you.
I hope you're on a mountaintop, deep
in a forest, having a picnic
with black bears. I know
this is unlikely, but so is you finding
this letter.

I want you to ignore my body.
I died as I lived, writing
about you and breathing slow.
As I died, a nightingale
landed next to me, took
one look at this letter, and said,

“I like that it's a poem. But, the commas
are doing a lot of work. The black bears
are lovely though, even if they're too jittery
in real life. But gosh, since you love this person
so much, I'll make sure they can find you.”

Isn't that a lovely story?
I hope it's everything you need.

I've got to go now.
The bird's my ticket to a better
place. Don't want to miss that ride.
Lord knows, I couldn't
handle somewhere worse than this.
I hope better is better.
And I hope someone reads this,
even if it's not you.

Yours forever,
me

The Dying Worker's Soliloquy

I'm not brittle
let's get rid of that early

there's just emptiness
in my ribs

not that i've
not known
empty

I had my blank spots,
under construction,
what mom used to say,

"We all stay being
built until the day
we're not."

I'm not brittle
there's just no more building.

did I have more plans?
yes

am I angry I've been robbed?
yes

but I don't feel tired
anymore and the soles of my feet
aren't dry and my shoulders
are just shoulders now.

I did deserve more than this.

Some part of the world owed me something.

But I was never
a loan shark, and debts
are never settled with counting
fingers

it all just goes to the dirt
and grows as soft slicing grass

Trying to Recall the Name of a Skull

everyday you're here amidst the moss-stone
sunbleached white against green cushions
I think I saw a painting like that once
I knew what a painting was once
I knew who you were once
I know you had eyes
green grey blue amber orange apple
new day new eyes
fill up those sunken grottos with gems
you had a gap tooth
but now you have teeth gaps
or have you grown teeth to fill your gaps
I tried to put stones in those teeny holes
but picking up is tricky
I tried to pick you up
but you just got wet
sweaty bones
you sweat in the mornings
unless you're letting someone else try to hold you
are you two timing me
I guess you can't cheat since I don't know your name
is it peter
piper
pec
pepper
sally
shelly
seashore
I don't think seashore's a name
but we went there once
you were scared of the seagulls
and my parents
but the seagulls didn't care you drove a 2005 camry
I didn't either
we found a swing to sit on and we watched
the sky get sunkissed like our cheeks
then you put your head on my lap
and I played with your hair
until the seagulls squawked with the stars

Two rats battle over the last piece of flesh on my bones.

They could split it,
set a table with a red, checkered
cloth, some candles, a bottle of vino,
have some smooth accordion
serenading the background, pretend
they're Lady and the Tramp;
I wonder who'd play the Tramp.

One's clawed the other's eye out now,
and the one with the soupy eye,
desperate, disoriented,
has chomped down on its own tail, giving
the eye clawer time to skitter away, my flesh
in its mouth, and soupy eye notices none of this,
just keeps taking bites out of itself,
whole chunks between its jaws,
blood on its maw and seeping from its socket
and rear, gasping out distressed squeaks
between chews of its own meat
until it finally collapses,
its side jumping up and down
and up and down and up and down,
then nothing,
a new pet to keep my carcass company.

I always thought at the end of the world
us paycheckers would be soupy eye,
and the investors would be eye clawer,
but when the end arrived,

they were the two rats,
and we were the piece of flesh.

An author's note on the act of consumption

Wouldn't you prefer to be consumed by mouth or time
then to exist endlessly behind a fogged partition?

Imagine you are a sentient apple.

It seems like your worst possible fates
are to be eaten or to rot,

but imagine you are a sentient apple
who has hoarded mass amounts of apple wealth,
and used said apple wealth to slurp all your juices
into a sealed, apple shaped container.

You'd have built yourself an eternity
to miss the red of your skin.

There's a crack now

in 240, right near
the elk mountain exit.
Started little, typical wear,
got water in it, then the temp
dipped low, wheels rolled at it,
got growth, and the empire fell.
Every empire fell.
So it went crater and creature comfort.
A whistle pig took up root amongst
the dandelions, locust saplings,
the blackberry brambles
who had just begun teething,
and with its claws, planted
a route to the highway hole and a route
to the backyard which had once been barred
by the thunder and persistence
of dogs, and both routes and others
met at the burrow furnished full
of mineral and marrow,
someday to be full of whistle piglets
who will dig up, out, and over to new craters
off different exits. They will do
what has been done and not know
that their mounds are in a crack.
A crack that's been growing long before them
and long after.

Number the Bone Bits

1. stomach churned to a curdle
2. tear gas can to the eye
3. molded bread and a steep bill
4. a tibia
5. vomit caught in the esophagus
6. billy club to the brain
7. water for dinner one too many times
8. a spine
9. mucus clotted and clogged the cogs
10. rifles emptied into bags of meat
11. teeth shaving against themselves
12. an ulna
13. whites of the eyes like dried tobacco
14. jumped on the grenade and swallowed
15. last meals of dust and silence
- 16.

Ol' Scratch on the Hunt

I. Chastising

the cracked asphalt
an amalgamation of craters and crevices
grits against the bottom of My hooves

but this texture that would typically bother Me
fills Me with blue flame today.

I am gathering debtors.

each one loved to blame Me for their problems
as if I had time to create destruction
when I was busy crafting its consequences
no.

they were the sowers of their evils
and I exist to reap.

did you know a corrupt soul cannot leave the body?
it gets stuck in the bones
and sits there
waiting for the body to decompose
unable to see or hear
but able to smell and feel
each bit bloat
full of purple and green
and flake off the bone.

My teeth and tongue quiver at the thought.

II. Collection

I hate these cookie cutter mansions;
they've got no decadence
no chaos, just painted on marble
and faux terracotta roof tile

alexander palace, versailles
those were real.

the door is rotted and shot open

the inside too, glass scattered
across the floor, faces missing from paintings.

in the living room, I find the skeleton I want
blackened and atop scorch marks.

I poke a hole in the skull with a claw
then press my lips to it and siphon out a soul.

Oh God thank you thank you please help me
such an optimist
I swallow him whole.

maybe one day I'll be the frying pan
but the fire's so much fun.

III. Cheaters

I've seen so many attempts at escape
surgeries, cleanses, stimulants, clones
but separating the water and soul
from the skin is ridiculous.

Idiotic fat rats, panicked
drunk on fermented dumpster grapes
throwing their cheese at a wall
hoping it sticks.

they did not cheat death.
they just cemented themselves as ghosts for eternity.

confused ghosts moping
about in decayed memories
easy to catch.

I find two staring at a fallen
rusted mailbox
and slurp them up
and spit out their water onto the grass

perhaps it will hydrate wildflower
seeds beneath the soil
and they will bloom
into an array of yellows and oranges
covering the sullen ground with color.

I hope this happens for them.
I'm merciful in this way.

Haiku on the Post-Apocalyptic Eagle

stone head on a seal
lost under rubble, beak chipped
all torn from the sky

The Story of The Evaporation

In the beginning
it's nothing,

a headline on Twitter:
Cough in a Couple Overseas Cities
You've Never had the Money to Go to,

a teensy pinch to remind a waking brain sleep
is for the blessed and the dead,

or a jab to tell a tired mind, clinging to open eyelids
just means watching the sunrise through window blinds,

a quick wrinkle 'tween the brows
then legs swung out of covers,
or a phone tossed by the bedside,

a reason to take a one to five minute break
from using excel to pick a random winner
out of those that completed the guest survey

to joke about how humanity
might not be the means of its own end,
and if so, surely it's meant to go,

a mouth corner upturns, a few teeth show,
a nose intakes and exhales with a bit more force and rapidity.

Then it's a cough in a city you went to once
when your dad was still alive,

a moment to wonder if that taco shop,
where your pops put too much green sauce
on his burrito and sweat through his shirt,
is still open.

Then there's coughs in the city next to that one, then in the one next to that,
then the next one and the next one, then it's in yours.

Then it's a new headline:
Toxic Air Made Worse by Other Toxic Air,

a few fumes from the fracking near that first city,
the meat farms all over rural america,
the paper mill in the town over,

a smattering of sticky droplets great for growing
with a virus to grease up the breathing process,

a simple second to know you've got it,
a friend telling you that base in Antarctica got it too,
another simple second to know you've always had it.

Then after everyone can feel stiff fingers
on their shoulder and a scythe by their ear,
it's unknown and nothing new,

a group of politicians spittling in blue light, spewing out
that everyone has it, so you should still set that alarm for Monday,

all the world's scientists stuck in a fluorescent basement,
huddled around a bubbly beaker like wizards,

a desperate faith someone's funding this magic for your use,
but if magic were funded for you, your dad would've got that new kidney.

Then one scientist catches a conscience
and springs a leak,
only the rich could fund the cure,
so the cure is only for the rich;

there's a cacophony of cop cars,
either engulfed or charging,

a salute of handmade grenades soaring
through the battered doors of notarized buildings,

a comrade shot,
bleeding on top of shattered windows,
becoming a stained glass mosaic, you

holding their hand as if each of their fingers
are a baby Jesus, and each of yours
a Madonna,

and as each Jesus finger dies
for someone's sins, you remember

what your complacency looked like,

an SUV, Amazon,
the Amazon burning,
the weaponized nature of helplessness,

and then you wonder, if the chanters
at your first few rallies would think
this is what democracy looks like,

but the aesthetics don't matter anymore,
so you grab ammo off the stained
glass corpse, and fire and fire and fire.

And finally,
it's nothing again.
The cure isn't won.
There was never a cure to win.
Since the cure is only what the elite always do,

separate themselves from themselves
and claim that's not a mistake;
this time they spilled all their body's water out
and supposedly an inkling of memory too.

So you give up on cures.
You grab the family you have left.
You hold their hands.
You pass a bottle, a pipe,
and kindnesses amongst each other.

You wonder if the dinosaurs are waiting for you.

Haiku on the Post-Apocalyptic Taco Bell

you helped make this world
focused on cheese, killed all cows
only your beef lives

nothing's a virus besides a virus

An owl hoots, perched
on a roadside sign
smothered in rust
and kudzu vines;

the hoot glides clear,
and a field mouse freezes,
since sound's not caught,
when car's don't make breezes;

the mouse darts swift
into primrose blooms,
inside loam filled potholes
petals suckling the moon;

the prim roots sit
right next to a tree's
whose leaves block a billboard
that now houses bees;

the next day, bees
will search for sweet nectars
and pull pollen from roadkill
the highway's collected;

four of the rotted
lay next to each other
two parents, a sister,
a baby boy brother,

all are shriveled
like leftover orange rinds;
lichens sprout from their thumbs,
all their hands intertwined.

An Author's Note on What's Left to Be Said

My towel smells funky, like me
if I'd been left as droplets, dried into fuzz.
It should be washed soon, but I
don't want to wash my sheets, so I don't
wash my towel. Sometime this week I will.
I promise. And I'm sorry.

I think I speak, or think, things
into existence. This is why
I spend so much time staring at the diagonal line
my eyes create. Why I always want to claw
out the eyes of this shattered, dogshit world. And this is
why I want to kiss its eyelids and tell it
it won't be sad forever.

I'm worried that what started as therapy, catharsis
became revenge/wishful thinking/a jinx.
I'm worried all the time I've spent sponging
has led me to only be able to leak, when I want to flood.
But I'm worried a flood will kill somebody.

I should've knocked on wood after each poem.
There are so many tables in my house.