

*a.k.a.*

Bob Perelman

Originally published as Tuumba 19 by Lyn Hejinian in 1979.

I am often conscious, yet rain is now visibly falling. It almost combines to be one thing, but here I am again. Though he dreamed he was awake, it was a mistake he would only make at a time like that. There are memories, but I am not that person.

An inspected geography leans in with the landscape's repetitions. He lived here, under the assumptions. The hill suddenly vanished, proving him right. I was left holding the bag. I peered into it.

The ground was approaching fast. It was a side of himself he rarely showed. The car's tracks disappeared in the middle of the road. The dialog with objects is becoming more strained. Both sides gather their forces. Clouds enlarge. The wind picks up. He held onto the side of the barn by his fingertips.

The little eye muscles flicked the pictures happily from side to side. The buildings, the sky were delighted. They broke into capital letters. A cloud of minute degrees idealizes itself, until I see what I thought. Who the world is, can tell by my language. He took a scissors and cut out a quarter of the record.

The lids of known things, dissolved behind the scenes. In place of remarks, read mournful silence. Each second the features repeat. These hills are the same ones they are. The past will contain the future. I found that I had put my shoes on backwards. I faced the other way. By the time he got there, he had totally forgotten the way back. He was back home, out back. Audibly, it was centuries collapsing.

The letters of the week are like the days in the words. The mind fills up with what's left. One thought connects with another, until by paying attention I ran like a clock. The earth revolved quickly. He displayed his scars.

I name the things after the words that sponsor them. He normally knew little of the depths below daily consciousness, except for what the shifting weights and tones of the immediate senses never fail to lay out over long periods drifting across the whole thing. I'm afraid I didn't catch... He fell off a log.

The senses dry up, but the statements stand more rooted with each breath. After four billion years, rocks developed brush strokes. Froth appeared at the corners of his mouth. I refused the blindfold. The curtains are light grey and getting brighter. Outside is anywhere for a few more minutes. Then a sound of hammers constructing the sets.

The pictures are in the head by prior arrangement. Every day after lunch they just wheel it in here and leave it. He was on his own. The tracks were obvious gouges in the mud.

To fully reveal his sources would be to stand there for years, shaped like his sentences. No one gets away. The same light shows both sides of the wall. I will be where I said I would be. The force of the explosion erased the blackboard.

He could only refer to a single body of fact. Dead certainties lumbering center stage. The colors remained to suggest. Picture and sound, no let up. However devious, he eventually accepted their advice. A rain of meteors, a fjord. Asleep, I was given dull scissors and bad light. The animal sat up, but refused to beg.

Goes to the end, and comes back already said. From out of nowhere, he admired the view. Noun state, I state, a fact in the room says so. The subject stared at the object.

Only with the sense that the world is not solid is it possible to move. The capacity of the brain is in no danger from any of its occupants. Mumbles within the possibilities, clears throat, lies down. A shaft of cold air muscled its way through the upper pass.

I put the chalk down, as the two rocks already formed a line. His eyes returned insistently to the absent solid. The station pulled itself apart into two equal halves. He addressed the remaining part of the problem. I pointed out the window and watched my finger change.

What had been sun was now a green tin cap on a rooftop vent pipe. The words did nothing to soften the view. A blunt mental instrument introduced me to an orderly arrangement of day to year too slow to be of much use to any but the most total backdrop. The car stood poised in the drive. A bird flew behind a building, as was its right. I registered it with dreamlike ease. The angles above and behind the head were less instructive.

The world is divided into the parts I pronounce to separate myself from the wall. Eyes open wide, no hoax. He made a careful distinction, and was trapped by the massive syllables. It was like being eaten alive, or looking into a mirror, exhaling his biography. I took the long way around.

He mentioned the obvious, and hoped it would stay there. I, and my right arm. This line spoken by the wall. The hole to represent sleep. Moving toward it, well within reach. No chance to take any of it back. And we just got here. He danced on the cliff's edge for an hour before noticing that it was now fifty yards away.

The sun had set and the snow was blue. The curtain fell. What happens, happened. I faced the photograph, talking. The projection assumed control of the space perceived, a memory sitting bolt upright. The walls are just a preview. It didn't matter where he looked. To be on the safe side, he shut his eyes.

He tucked the words inside his ear, and lost them. The sun had risen, once and for all. The sunny side of the street was visible, by heart. Behind there, beforehand, under some canvas, struggling bulk. I poured the cellist his fifth martini.

I began to sketch an open eye. He felt that he would be given exactly enough facts. He put his books in boxes in the basement and went to India. He got there. He stopped and thought. There was no suspense. The sky was a brittle white as the afternoon drew to a close.

His dreams were so far away he literally couldn't see them. The rock appeared to be sitting on all fours. He knocked on the door. I lost consciousness and sped away. Years later, he recognized the features of the landscape as his own.

Pent human agony, the wall stood for glances caught and crushed. He connected his nerves to the objects of his choice. There was no adequate defense. Soon he was to know everything by its name.

He found what he thought, or, fallen, itself. As if from a great height, permission granted, the corners of the visual empire expanding. All this time, with myself a distant second. The flame disappears, as is. A changed word sharpened the pencil. A triple stroke drew and felled the tree. I breathed forward.

Words ride up the photon stream, and hit the building opposite to where the light has gathered it into a shape. He drove to Bakersfield, so to speak. The fisherman spread his arms wider and wider.

The ambitious storyteller, in tears, presents the past, listening for the ominous footsteps. A tangled detour pushes downhill. Studiously ignoring the dust in his dreams, he wondered at the tracts of houses. He grew a tail, but repented. I turned off the radio, turned the light on, and assumed my proper size as the sights bounced back. Stones and ice encircle Saturn.

The mind can be healed by me. Alive, and thus it can die. The hard part fought to a standstill. A chance to say exactly what I. Convinced along the entire length, which has two ends. The dog could be anywhere, within reason.

The weather continues fair, the car corners easily. He reflected the preceding centuries. The future will not remember itself. All our hopeful obeisance in that direction slaps our feet as infants. The wall was rubble, the detail crystal clear. Thinking shapes itself in its own image, as nearly as can be managed. Saddled with the responsibilities. A true story.

The trouble with any pace includes the immovable object. It stopped before it starts. The early address of his life becomes more diffident, the color of those skies more nearly the off white of words out of no mouth in particular now. He tricycles into the lake. Told over until unrememberable, the physical features grow so long winded they have to be called off. A high note caught and held. The parishioners soaked it up.

He went too fast for anything but the past to catch up with him. A point of light furnished by the bloodstream allowing no exit for the colors. After much thought, he opened the door a crack and peered out into the hall. Rust had gathered on the blossoms.

Outside the focus, caught, locked in place, the sun was moving. The humanist took the bull by the horns. Infuriating that it was him. I named the parts of the body, starting with the name. Letter by letter, thrown forward into many lives, with plans for the trees. Certainties cross the street. Once acquired, speech is not easily withstood. Grammar and nonsense, a war to end all wars. I dig my toes into the sand, clearly and distinctly. Dark trees crowd into the photograph.

Randomly asserted in the well travelled middle. The sky was crowded with allegorical figures. I looked at the dense display, and held my ground. Just off by itself, a place.

What has been used will be used again. So meanings appear only as acts of will. The rain was pushed sideways by its use. He clenched his teeth and drove the sentence inside the sound.

Looking at the letters, the retina mirrored attention. Just as difficult to get in as out. He saw a picture of himself, small, and too far away to be called. I felt the shaped view seen as if left alone, out in the weather, swaddled, here to deal with the consciousness I generally reflect to have noticed after a certain groping across the air, the pushed surfaces, plastic, washed, pressing down on the subject and elsewhere. Nothing gives up. The roof colors were rotating on out. *Somebody* had to be there.

Naming, recording, and repeating what had happened, the nation believed itself for up to two hours at times. Speech requires massive jolts to continue, as the automobile submerges it. Sunday morning faces bright with the chaotic gift of tongues, minds. Music pitched too high to be criticized came down from the sky. The murderer stepped out noisily from behind the garage. Clarinets move along softly. Nobody said a word. A number flashed on and off at the bottom of the screen.

There was really no other chance for the surviving shapes. What I see is a space equal to the demands. Daylight arrives independently. Thinking about them as they appear, the forms are longer than life. Trees said to line the whole road.

The baby's voice speaks, sings, cries, breaks. I remember how this thing is supposed to work. Excite the organism into words, compare spectra. Hello. I stood under the waterfall and quoted the winds wholesale, windy colors for human consumption, time out of mind. He wobbled on his two wheels.

There were just noises when he got there, saying the first thing he saw when the screen lit up. Birds still against cloud cover. The shadow effect piles up to demonstrate the constant gravity, a sort of booby prize. Doubt being the only civilized response, the rock sank quietly to the bottom. Water flows in the gorge below and supports the nomenclature. Simple nouns, growing like weeds, inching along into what they all seem to be instructed in, delayed, but at full throat up there toward the treetops.

Nostalgia precedes the focus. Long sun asking deep questions. Bodies broken, not there. Ideal city cranked up to heaven. They lay down in the picture and soon were indistinguishable from grass that blackened the border. As if it were imaginary, the shape of the minutes slides over the edge. After the fact, the missing link is discovered in the center of the formula.

The individual grows a concern for the immortality of the soul. Meanwhile, there are people to talk to. On the street, the randomly colored samples eye their disastrous relatives. I ended my days as an extruded tube of memory, turned inside out by the sociable rhythm of my words as I craned around for a last look at the four letter light, the three letter light. The seasons are a compass rose.

Where did the heat come from, does it go. He held out his arms in a hopeful apotheosis of space, but it was air, a street, summer, cars tooling around the phony escape clause. The trees were diagrammed sentences, taking their time. A radio supplied blemished chords. I thought it out beforehand, as if it were myself, and had to be remembered at the edge of every gesture. Back in toward the center, the constellation of loved ones, near and huge. He was frozen out, behind a quick glyph. Delete flesh, read body of words. It's gone to save a place inside.

The bat is applied to the ball and all eyes turn outward. Cries of delight accompany it. The grass is light green, the sky grey light, mud oozes up along the sidewalks. He is a group of boys. There they are, set and scattered. Right field is foreshortened. Montage is as yet uninvented, so the sentence never ends. He yells constantly in an effort to distinguish himself from the empty spaces filled with light. News comes via word of mouth at dinner. The numbers in the morning vary continually.

At this time, everybody still ran. It was an ordinary expression of space, and nobody was counting. The game would begin. There would be an up, a down, a back and forth. It was a relief to be so attentive, so fleetingly for so long, and so often. Trees down at the end. Unofficial darkness in among where he would have to go.

Walls and views became extremely portable. Stories were told, which thickened the murk. A brutal necessity to add up to one. Everyone continues insisting on that, hammering at the increased sphere. So I ran and ran, but saw myself later and later, the further and faster. And was a constant.

And still will have waited, waiting for changes in air, sky, bushes, smell. Extravagant hopes grew atop the citizens' earnest, helpful, modest glares. Food grows an icebox to hold it. Appalling gulfs. Tantrums at dinner. Dreams show off, it's a battle of words. A dilemma rips open the sack and a dilemma leaps out, opposed. They exchange addresses. I live here, always have, always will. Now there's wind stirring those leaves. Always was.

A constant drift forward knocks the bottom out. He was all places at once. You bet I'll make that light. A combination of opportune reminiscences ran over the fire hydrant. Gouts of water, civic sex on a shrinking tax base. Thought tries to overhear itself through the obvious and ominous haze. It's afraid to go to sleep.

This is before ancient history. The arrangements are skeletal, by hand. The reasons for stopping are nowhere apparent, but are in force. I hear that the record is playing. It was the sound of his voice, trying to speak and laughing. Or, if asleep, groaning and vaguely terrified. He had no choice, he had to be downtown. Responsibility for the massive weight oppressed him. A glib oversketched cityscape. Someone had forgotten to turn the mechanical pencil off. I had hoped for a calm display of the variables, justice, excitement, sun, water, grass, a bag lunch, a portable history. He found himself listening to the National Anthem.

The much maligned individual held himself up as a physical fact beyond reproach. My hands were misspelled. I translated. Feebly shot forward at the time, I soon outdistanced my terms of comparison. The buffalo were long gone. The car's windows went up and down, as the grey road took place, a scenery balanced on either side. An argument of some kind was going on, that much was visible. It took a big rig to get through the mess.

Ground gets covered this way, a burnt offering sadly loving its milk. There's an even flat space, a placed place. He stretched his body to cover it. In the cubed and domed landscape, I died, twisting and leaping in no longer air to breathe. He saw his way through. It hadn't happened yet.

The pleasant present tense. He wasn't sure it was a compliment. The described moment came, surrounded by unembodied memories. The bus was jammed. A spotlight played over the crowd standing in line.

The future was the easy way out. A doorway painted on the wall, walked through, and then to my nostalgia I don't get back. Allowing things to change into their opposites helped, hurt. Drawing a straight line means disregarding everything else. He would be welcomed back with open arms if only he were there.

Three is placed inside four as a token of success. Four in five. Four is four. He devoured these partials. The opposition is noble, rock like, rock and sky. The voice extremely moot as to the field it proposes to tuck itself inside of, a wave, a little naive, a little water always there. The air carries cross current sounds charged freight numberless ways exchanging grabbed rumors. Unspoken weights and vengeful thoughts, how the tongue might have moved inside the mouth. It takes place once.

I woke up ten times in a row, twelve, twenty. It was a winning streak and my smile couldn't have been quicker to come and go. He would fondly shape the memory of thick black hanging bursts of maple leaves surrounding and obscuring streetlights. Then he would push the button marked past and a mottled cast of light escaping. Such support, and the distances so tactfully withdrawn. The sky tiny, limitless. I listen to the correct calm sequence and am a ring.

I helped carve the stone. See, now it speaks, or thinks to. But his actions add up, and he guided by an atmospheric hand occasionally visualized in the dull daily play of clouds across. The body is a story, the brain a fable. I believed it, yet I lived to tell a different tale. A cow stumbles into focus.

The pictures stay on the outside, mentionable only in the sped light. The bucket overturns, the plains are flooded. Words crying colors aloud chip off walls. A few moments stored for years and released without noise. Blue of the sky displayed openly to no further effect. Some read the signs, and so could see what they thought at a moment's notice.

Words sink back into the head and say what I think. I'm asleep, aslant. A burnt cinder leans against the granite, hard at work. Forms as played water, breathes meaning it, stopped to say, stood to listen, gained clear pictures focused down blent eyesight. He was on a planet with other people.

Tones of voice weren't all there were. Keeping one thing firmly in mind, he walked along the sidewalk. Screech of brakes nearing body work. A few years later an owl hooted ominously in the book I looked up from. Antennas turn as channels are changed below. Still, there's an even steady beat, a horrified abundance of movable pastels. A mother gets out of one with a bag of groceries and the progression loses its balance and must leave home, write.

Since last Wednesday he had found himself on an island abounding in goats and books. Coterminal with the seconds, something that was not there menaced the shadows with what was not lit. I noticed myself in the mirror. Big enough for both of us, and locked. My hands sweat out their allegiance to the alphabet drummed into them by engineers of what's now my choice.



Sequence wakes up in the dark, upset. Willing to do anything to get away, and stays where that is.

The famous tunnels beneath the city were mostly all filmed by now. The actors had hurried down the forever lengthening yellow corridors. Music of a different century played. Played backwards, it was a torrent of abuse. Dead stalks, short memories, sympathy strikes. Up above, the light was blinding.

In the middle of the syllables there was a doorway of strewn april tornados doors blown open insides shown out and away as the wreckage always scatters to a standing wave. He sat on a rock and was awarded a head by interference. It was a watch that would run both ways at the same time. Roared the medley backwards brought to my senses, and back still further. I learned my first words of the old language. Light filled the window and swept the floorboards. He wanted to yell at the buildings. The needle wallowed in the groove. The opposite of biography stares out of my face. I remember it as if it were about to happen. After all, it's right in front of me. A physically active sky. The echoes bouncing back as a series of tightening categories inhabited by a big personal person.

Everybody gets a biography. Pinholes effect the maximum registration. Vocabularies set up camp on a blurred, running, bloody map. Now they write the lyrics out so I'll know what the song is talking about. Faces choosing their type, and vice versa. Schoolboy torn in half by book. An italicized *i* staggers down the street, making its demands known to the traffic.

As simple as starting at infinity and ending in drab, glum haste, missing the whole boat. But he could never see that the days performed any useful function, taken separately. It's a question of nerve, learning to forget just in time. And there is the damp corner where the story is kept. He's in there, too, agonizing over won-lost records. It's a confusion, some doorway wanted out of the seasons. Captured by the first thing I hear, I think a difference, but simply was, finally. A splendid personal view accessible after years of filtering. Black and white sunlight added to the inventory. Print on durable paper, etc. Test of time to withstand test of time.

Backlog of outtakes, smiles, folding matchbooks. Two thousand year old empire in eight year old brain. No beginning. A logging road, I was there, it was gone. Daylight washes sentiment out onto the road. It says what it is. He meant to say, or dreamt to blend, bend. Vibrations breaking colors buzz away. The earth grows more literal each year.

In a dream a piece of writing is a raised surface, one word standing for another on the lower level. An element is substituted for another via the simple authority of say so, being there. The distance transversed is charming, extravagant. Moustache reads as the eyebrows of a woman in flannel, a distant relation, dancing. He heard the voice stop muttering and it was replaced by his own, booming instructions down to the valley below. Smoke curls up from chimneys throughout the charming Swiss village of Denkmittel.

He heard the music and stood up. Played at appropriate speed, incurable motion out the window. The names are maintained to prevent the accumulations of self-esteem from crashing too harmlessly into private abysses. As if hearing were a perfection of air perpetrated among rivals, sets of teeth, synonyms, sentence structure, ruptured blood vessels. He held on, in advance. Night fell, and I lived through that, too, expressing the expressable in terms of the expressed. On good terms with neighbors, dependable, daily, there, smiles, and is currently writing and reading this sentence.