

*28 days*  
*RASHA LAMA*

## *ENTRIES*

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mon.18.nov	<i>LUNCH</i>
tue.19.nov	<i>STAIRWELL</i>
wed.20.nov	<i>STREETS</i>
thu.21.nov	<i>MORNING</i>

*LIBRARY (thu.24.oct.)*

I sit on the top floor, birds-eye view of the stage underneath. On the level of the roofs of the buildings we admire most, I see the ants below, the Gods above.

Below, the ants: the people walking by. I see a woman take her time walking round the bend between Lower Field and Redpath Museum. She wears a white top, jean jacket, black jeans. A common look. I see a man walking steadily, head down, hoodie up, a grey jacket and no hesitation in his step. He must be headed to a class or preparing himself for another round of studies. A man bikes past a couple crossing the bend. They head up the stairs into the museum, and he bikes out of scene. A common scene. These are the ants the Gods watch.

Above, the Gods: the smoke rising from my level, roof. The smoke rising to turn into clouds and join the great migration, Nature's great water migration. Through the city, up the mountain, down the river, the Gods we produce in machines and in cubicles, they rise up the chimney stacks, above the roofs, to the skies above. These are the Gods the ants pray to.

Again, below a dog runs in frame: the ant of an ant. A big black dog on the ground, up here just another black ant of an ant. Runs to the larger ant trailing steps in the muddy snow below. Funny, the grey snow-prints reflect the Gods above (but the ants cannot see their day's journeys in a large scene from above, and the Gods cannot see their reflections in the steps of these ants).

Here I sit on the top floor, watching the Gods rise (only because the ants give them fuel) and the ants walk (only because the Gods give them purpose). The birds-eye view of the stage built by the same materials found in the ground. Ants, we remain on the ground. Buildings, we construct to carry ants above ground. Roofs, buildings surrender to pass the baton to the Gods of Smoke that rise to the sky. Clouds, mixed of Nature's eternal cycle and Ant's progressive desire.

I watch the play for entertainment. I then get delirious, fall down the steps, back to solid ground and find myself an ant again in the drama of the play, the desire for progression, and the soothing comfort of the smokestacks that build God every day.

*CLASS (fri.25.oct.)*

Friday morning, class in Trottier. A new building, new for me and new for campus. I like the stairwell, how pure its materials are. Simple, clean, easy to understand. There is peace in knowing the entire object can be understood by its single textural component. I can understand it further when evolved, transfigured into another shape or function.

Landscape Architecture is the class. I show up in my outfit palette of greens, browns, and black. The professor is bursting with interest, the students clicking away designing their project plans. I sit in comfort and awe. I wonder how I didn't see it earlier, especially through my journals the past 6 years. That's ok, I've found myself somewhere that makes sense. And I can only hold excitement for how much more there is to learn here.

As clear as I can be, I read an essay in this class that connected every piece of my interests in a clear developed manner. It synthesized every quality in relation to one another. It revealed the multitude of pathways diverging from my initial stage of interest. I keep learning of the same ideas from different perspectives, and now have reached the core to hold it with what I know and what I feel, to reveal the immense vacuum of knowledge and discovery I have yet to explore.

As a kid, I knew the word "knowledge" held some gold for me. Years later on this detour-filled path, I still find I hold my youthful eyes that light up in the presence of my passions — now I see my life as a mosaic of my favourite pieces I've collected along.

*COUCH (sat.26.oct.)*

A familiar sight, reminded of Saturday afternoons, after lunch out by the sea, back home where the sun pours its last remaining light as if asking to come out and play for a bit longer. There was this distinct stillness in the living room that could not be moved, could not be lived through even with the characters of our family passing though. As if the living room always knew it could never be changed, simply inhabited at different times of day. I remember this familiar feeling as I wave my friend away, feel the lunch settle in my stomach, walk back home in the snow this time of year, noticing how the sun does not try to call us out to play anymore. We find our seats on the couch that doesn't move, and turn on the orange lamp instead.

His walls are yellow, his couch is blue, like the beach of my childhood backyard. It's Saturday afternoon: no obligations, no rush. I sit to read while he cleans his place. I see the books piled on his tables. The cat emerges through them. I open my book to read the first page, I find my loose hair in front of my face. It's Saturday, no obligations, no rush, no need to put up the hair that signals the rough night last night. I open my book to read the first page. It's a fiction by Woolf, my friend recommended saying "her writing style reminds me of yours!" That morning I found out we both had the same mental funk. I picked up her book today to start on the first page. She lost me on the first page, the stream of consciousness, the large paragraphs, no ending sentences, muddled observations into philosophies, no narrative in sight. I feel a rush to read something more, something real, some non-fiction to do something on this Saturday afternoon. I look to the first page and see, my thoughts have run just the way her do, too. I guess my head runs just like many others. I feel the calm wave over me and the sun warm me. I turn back to the page, read it through, and flip to page two.

*SUNDAY (sun.27.oct.)*

Array, like crumbs on a tray. I urge to write for the routine, the calm that I can expect after every entry. Even without thoughts to write, I crave some release. I must have some routine in place, some release if I am to drop the preemptive measures to ensure a “happy, jolly, oblivious” life.

Yet, perhaps as I write, I place these ideas of who I am and how I see things on my analysis of the world. I must step back and see myself as just another person with her own set of eyes, expectations, desires. What she feels is what she sees is what she says, but not necessarily the truth of things around.

Today, I walked in the rain and soaking leaves and felt the line of thoughts spinning for no reason. Even on a Sunday do these thoughts find room to expand. Let me be, allow myself to be silent and empty to see what actually exists around me, and what are just words strung to thoughts in my head.

BATHROOM (mon.28.oct.)

Foggy foggy,  
pixel pixel,  
shower steam on dusty mirrors,  
foggy foggy on window panes,

(no balance in and out,  
in and out,  
no balance in and out.)

foggy foggy,  
here is an apparition appearing in midair,  
in and out,  
balance soon to come,  
fog soon to leave,  
apparition soon to fade:  
a self-portrait.

I wake and the weight of my eyes pull me to the ground\* and make me grab onto whatever dreams are dissolving away.\* I feel the cold inside now on my skin, too.\* I wonder if the day will be cold or unbearably cold.\* I rise to feel my toes clenched all night.\* I remember my broken promise that I would release them, go on a walk for them to breath.\* I suffocate them in sheets wrapped too tight.\* I watch my reflection in the mirror draw nearer and hold my face that doesn't feel like my face but of the girl in the mirror I watch.\* I hold water to my eyes to wash what tears escaped last night.\* I pause to notice my loose hair and bruised eyes and puffy cheeks wondering how I've been watching this ghost of my heritage for 20 years straight.\* I walk to the kitchen to drink a cup of water like they/me told me/her to.\* The water boils and the steam finds her scream\*: warm tea filters through my words into my body. I feel nothing in my stomach.\* I feel all has escaped back a dark alley or through the cardboard cutout I carefully washed this morning.\* I carefully study this being: I find her records and play what is on and hear the comforting, soothing voice.\* There should be comfort in silence, that comfort from the self\* — There is nothing in this self, all leaks out the back.\*

*\*but I'm ok.*

*BENCH (tue.29.oct)*

Feeling slightly delicate today. Not sure how to tap it off considering it would feel disingenuous. But it makes sitting out in the cold to be alone with my hot pot of chilli (plastic bowl, plastic lid, plastic spoon) feel good. I speak of myself like a stranger to myself. And I do this to myself as I refuse to own a watch or even stay in one city for more than a season. I do this to myself with the constant moves and constant questioning.

I wonder if there's ever going back to the decent days where I wished for this without knowing the desolation it would bring. Days I would walk in the cold wishing for warmth, to be in the building warm and content, instead of sitting in the cold because warmth doesn't feel the same anymore. I look at girls my age and wonder if it's even possible anymore to reach out and dissolve into the simplicity of human drama, and to someday come back to this stage later when I have physical reasons to feel this way.

I think I think too much. This is good for me, writing plainly. I know I think too much and these words now prove that, too. These thoughts add their own opinions to every scene that I watch, awake or asleep. But the scene still goes on, whether I've had the time to write it out or not.

Students walk past to classes or buildings. The chilli cooks in the pot. The bench in the snow holds nobody. I walk through as another student, I ask for my own pot of chilli, I keep the bench company with ice under my feet. I eat as I watch the students continue past, and the chilli cooling in the air, and the bench warming under me. I am just another wave, it seems, another effect on these scenes that change and go. These thoughts that run and demand to win really are nothing but narrations of the life around.

I feel slightly delicate today, but knowing the vase is sheltered in my head calms me knowing if it were to break, it would only be my fault.



*MIND (wed.30.oct.)*

1. Last night's sleep was a bit odd. I was slightly paranoid with sounds, slept relatively early, woke at 4am with slight sleeping troubles, to then wake at 9am completely hot in my cold apartment with some fanatical dreams on my fading smile.
2. Yesterday was a day of independence from the morning to night. No conversation but simple asks and academic depth. The only extent of conversational depth was through my journal entry — another reason why writing is a pillar in my life. Living alone and weekend in busy seasons pushes you into isolated days: refreshing but easily dangerous.
3. I've been reminded of my time in Amsterdam. A lot of time spent on my own. Weekdays full enough of friends at work, and the daily 2+ hour walks around the city to observe and explore. The weekends in new countries, alone yes but always open to new conversations. There was another level of openness and connection those weekends. You open yourself to strangers knowing you both need company and won't see each other again. You do not steal your worth from yourself to fling as desperation against another. You open for the sake of meeting another being you have the pleasure in that single moment to meet, and move on.
4. Jealousy is the opposite of gratitude. I see my past dreams turned into reality and nothing allowed them to actualize but simple action and understanding of what I already have around me.
5. Memories of old ideas come back to me, fit together like pieces of a puzzle as I read more of what interests me, quite diverse yet elementally all connected in some way. Words I've scribbled in journals 6 years ago, I find hints of in the pile of books above my bed.

*APPOINTMENT (thu.31.oct)*

A gloomy day, I walk through the rain with my long coat and my muddy shoes. The sky is grey and the air is more grey. The clouds are closer to me today. I walk and wonder if I can see the cloud in front of me, or if it dissolves into me, or if I should just turn to see the other end of it. I wonder if I can see the clouds in more than one face, a real shape. I wonder if the sky (since it is closer to the ground today) can be seen as more than just a surface (but round as a shape). I see the rain etching the path in front of me. I see just strokes of water sketching through. But if I look a bit closer, I can see the droplets of the rain, see the bend of the shape and turn to see the other end, too.

I walk through the rain and find my feet leaving footprints on the pavement. There is mud and there is shadow, a print of water left behind. I see my presence as one face, a 2D print made and discarded on the ground before me. Yes, it will fade by the clouds that touch the ground today. But the foot will keep moving, my feet keep going, I keep going through my path, not 2D but 3D through. I can look back, if I ever fall into disbelief, and see the other face of this path leading away behind me. I look forward again to see where I'm headed. In the transition of the turn, I see the ties of my body from my backside to my frontside. I keep walking through, walking forward, and I wonder how interesting depth is, how interesting it is to walk through space, through it really, to see the other faces hidden in stationary sight.

Stationary, in my mind, I see gloomy thoughts. I cannot hold any shape so I see only what has been painted inside. I see the sadness but cannot hold the sadness. It turns numb. I keep walking to enter the building that is real, and has many shapes, and has many colours to hold and turn and understand in reality. I walk in to talk to the person who can help me move from my stationary position, to see my gloomy thoughts and add dimension to them, so he can hold them for me, so I can learn to hold them for myself. I go to seek help for the gloomy thoughts that paint themselves in my head with no depth of reason to exist but act as the simply mark of something that came and left, a footprint in my mind, one to accept that no sun will shine in and dry it away.

*BED (fri. 1.nov.)*



*See through,  
the neighbours see me and  
I cannot allow myself to sleep because  
I must watch myself too,  
how far I rise in my dreams or  
how lost I get down in the dark.*

*The neighbours watch me  
rise in the dead of night professing  
that God exists, to then find  
someone eating breakfast all in black,  
mourning the sleep that slipped  
without her.*

*See through,  
everything slips through me,  
I must stay up to watch with the  
neighbours  
the one stuck inside building herself  
after tearing her self, not knowing if  
God or the end is waiting for her.*

Here is the reality of the situation: I can't believe my memories are real, played in this narrative that is sung to others who know each other and believe the past is all real. There is tremendous amount of trust in your thoughts and memories. How false they can be, really.

And here I am thinking of my memories in Abu Dhabi or Amman or Amsterdam or here, and I see how true they are but how false they can feel. And I myself can make myself believe that, and I can spin tales round my head and believe every bit of one were real. How real these stories are that I tell myself, or every poet must be a little insane, for how else would they be able to feel so bad to steal so bad the memory of a real life of your life, steal your life from yourself to live day by day looking at yourself.

*I hear of this girl,  
she walks the streets at night,  
she sings to the moon above,  
in praise for what she has  
but prays for some worth within.*

*She wakes with her bed undone,  
no mask to add to her face,  
she smiles, feels the warmth in others  
yet she comes back to lay in her bed all free,  
the masks undone, she looks around to see  
none of it her, none of it here, none of it real  
she looks around to see if she really is here.*

*I wonder if she knows  
these dreams are real  
real they are, for they are her.*

*BOWLING (sat.2.nov)*

Amid the gutter, trash alleys, broken entrances, the city holds the setting of hundred of stories every night of the year.

I see the teenagers in their groups collecting at a centre to play billiards or eat nachos or watch movies. I do remember the times I was part of those groups. Not so long ago either. I look at them now, impossible to remove myself from the position of disbelief and awe. I look curiously how invested one can be, how perfectly strung one can be in the story or the game. Can they share the secret with me?

Let me try to say this again:

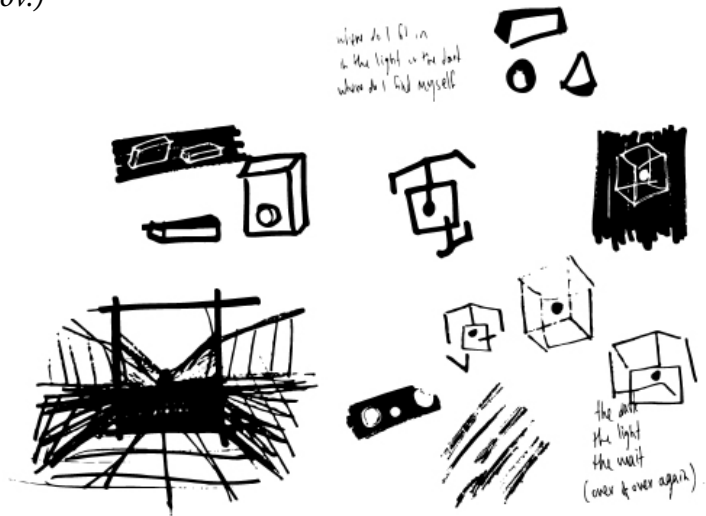
I went bowling with friends and was stunned to see how removed I was from the drama of an outing I held so dearly so recently. I see the excitement, competition, enjoyment, laughter, adventure spelling themselves in the expressions of my friends. I see them painted on my own face, too. But I do not feel my face, I do not see where it attaches to me. It used to be different. There was some excitement with dressing up, to whisper with friends, to sneak around. Nowadays, it feels as if the charm has faded, curtains pulled back, the pins on the floor waiting to be knocked down.

Can't I spit it out, can't I allow myself to say what runs through my head, here is what I must say:

I go bowling with friends and I don't feel it the same way I used to, I don't feel myself but a participator, a watcher of what is happening and reminding myself that I must participate normally, too. I see friends together, like together together, and my sleeping heart wakes up in questions asking if it could ever love again like that. I wonder if I'll ever allow myself to live comfortably when given the choice of challenge or knowledge. I feel I can only ever accept learning; thus, will always be in new situations beyond the norm, and beyond feeling like a regular person, always some participator.

I am unable to finish the thought.

SCENE (sun.3.nov.)



It seems there are multiple versions of perceptions of this present life that lives in front of me. And just in front of me now, there are more versions expressed through the changes of the observer and vantage point. It seems I'm watching multiple channels at once, or at least have only realized the life I've been watching since I first turned on has been a play of it all.

I can see the snow, soft flakes, falling peacefully from above. The smoke from the car billows to the left. What leaves remaining on trees softly flutter, almost sensing the chilly weather.

I can see the bark, coarse but long stripes of dark warm brown leading to the ground. The black mulch of static black matter, some mirror of the possibilities in object form. The green sedge that rolls to the right. The yellow ginkgo leaves scattered like an array of tissues to dry the rain.

I can see the people, figures passing left to right. Static finds shape and one channel interacts with another. The sounds of laughter, or banter through car windows or careful confessions. Every figure that passes is in their own world, on their own wavelength, and shares in this collection of channels, some stage of connection, a form of human communion.

*ALL\_NIGHTER (mon.4.nov)*

A long day, it's been a long day. A good day, I'm glad it was long.

It was long because I ended up missing the night. I stayed up for 12 hours straight working on a presentation for work. The only other time I pulled an all-nighter was for another creative project: landscape architecture plan for class last semester. This one is a Spatial Design project. If all goes well (spoiler: it does), I'll get my first project as *Rasha Lama, the Designer* (spoiler: I got it).

Yes, hours spent on sketches and drafting, but a result of an artpiece-turned-space. I see how easy it was for my mind to rest (finally) to stop the running thoughts and to just create. I see how natural it comes to me for how comfortable it is.

I realize, as well, how I reserve a word of acceptance for myself from myself every few months. I can only allow myself to revel in what good I've made solely on projects that mean something more than just a day or two of planning. I only reward myself once I create something out of one of many ideas I have (just like everyone else). The last time I patted myself on the back was August for surviving the lone move to Amsterdam, and this.

I feel I now have a reason to rest, at least for this day. I hope I can make it last more than a day, before I rush again to find something "productive" to do.

TREES (tue.5.nov.)



The definition of fresh is a crisp afternoon in the serene blushed trees with the squirrels crinkling leaves and sun kissing earth — like this one here.

This morning, I asked myself why I allow myself to suffer under false alarms. I torment my duties and abandon my responsibilities on the cries of ghosts that hold no position nor proof. I know I have lost interest in much that used to be interesting. I live in a set of events destined for the person I was before the summer. I left with this life expecting her to return. She hasn't but now wears ill-fitting clothes. Here, now in comfort,

this new being finds herself in the same confines of home. Comfort and shelter are necessary precisely my desires all summer. But alone, they don't do and I crave constant learning. I yearn to read more, know more, try more. Change is inevitable if I continue to breath and live truthfully as myself.

Observation: the ways squirrels and dogs play in the leaves warms me. The leaves keep falling and we keep seeing beauty, in change and survival even with the shedding and descending. We walk under canopies and over leaves for the safety and beauty. We are reduced at once into the peaceful inherent knowledge that the foundation is more than us.

Interjection: Do these squirrels not know they re the engineers of the future forests? They plan their trees instinctually, with the only loss of forgotten nuts being future trees. And the woodpecker that knocks on doors of bugs. Does she ask if her beak must be clean to enter the hearth of their bode? Does she knock just to sing and add harmony with the neighbourhood nests, or dd some bet to the ruffles of the squirrels' scavenge. The trees, the bars of the melody continue the memories of the frequencies, displaying scores on bark and pages on crinkled soil. Do they know they lead as composers with branches signalling continuous expanse of the tune, no end in sight except for the crashing windpipes, breaking tree trunks, silent decay of the artist and his music (until the underground hums and picks the dropped stems of the notes — the heartbeat awakens and the music continues.)

## INSOMNIA (wed.6.nov)



*now the proof of our fall:*

*the leaves of our past  
cleaned wiped and forgotten,  
maybe in some hints of  
broken leaves and abandoned sticks  
we find ourselves  
abandoned on deserted 3am streets  
until day comes clean  
streets rid of shadows  
our heads dull by the drunken light  
then night comes again.*

I go on walks when nothing else feels as good. Tonight is chilly, but I suppose it never stopped me in the past. Sometimes it's better chilly and dark for no one is out, and I do not have to look away from a friend or get lost in my headphones not plugged into anything.

I go on walks to keep the body going. The mind keeps going, the body might as well go, too. I walk down my steps, down to Pins, and I turn right towards the mountain, towards campus. I often walk there for I know the streets by heart. I know how the buildings must look and how the streets run. I can walk in my own mind and still have my body follow through.

I walk down St.Famille, a treasured street of mine. A street I found my first week in Montreal wondering how my image of a free city really manifested itself in this single street, to have found my apartment on it a year later, and now my studio a walk through it. I walk down St.Famille, speaking out loud to myself (a tradition from second year). No one is around. I speak to myself a bit louder out loud.

I turn on Milton. The stretch of excited second year life. I would walk this street straight home with such a strong feeling of responsibility, my own keys in hand headed out of class back to my own home. I walk this street now because I rarely walk it anymore. Biking is a blessing but a whizz past the alleyways, bookstore, and faint corners I've loitered with friends in the past.

I walk to University. At this point I am stuck. I can continue on campus grounds and relish in the wonder of being a university student. It still doesn't seem real, even 3 years in. I see my body with permission to be here to study here and roam here, blend in late at night with no one else but the security guards, I wonder how they believe me. I do belong here, but I wonder how I've fooled myself, too.

I decide to turn right on University, to go up the hill to Prince Arthur. I do this to tire my body to a point of silencing my mind. It works. On top, I feel the wind that rushes past my hair, the routine of biking down to home every day last summer. I walk down. I find the footprint of the squirrel still in the pavement. I pass the houses I've entered with friends last year and Google Maps this summer looking for some place to live. I walk down this street I know well, I walk in old memories. I walk on this ground that feels so familiar but feels so new. These feet still touch the new river that continues to flow.

Prince Arthur to St.Laurent, I walk up the busy street. People dressed, people enjoying themselves. I walk silently now (I've spoken enough out loud) to watch them who go by. I walk up there, turn there, head up there, enter there, and find myself in my bed again — 3:30am? I should be able to sleep now.



*CAFE (thu.7.nov.)*

Another alarm, another rise.

All I could do today was dispel my ongoing thoughts to him over coffee. Same thoughts in different words. I let mine go. I heard his thoughts, too. I see his thoughts rooted in feelings of confidence and vulnerability. While I face my own feelings of reality, he faces feelings of commitment. Commitment to my identity, commitment to his friendships.

As we pause over sips, we watch the early morning,  
we know the play of the characters on this stage  
a coffee routine to enjoy, twice a week (3 if we're lucky).

It's easy to get carried away, for me at least, to dispel every thought of mine in the past 2 hours of wake (and the dreams and the night and the preparation for the night). But I hold myself back, I share what thoughts can be neatly cut into slices to share. I do not indulge. I notice my instinct to finish the plate and be fully open but I cannot do that with matters to this degree. I also must protect my own self from my mind at times, I must look down at my hands that write desperately. I put my pen down to drink my coffee.

Kenya with notes of Saskatoon berry, citrus, and something else. Not our favourite, we prefer Guatemala. One day they got Nicaragua and I called him over to try a sip. I like the blackboard that chalks the day's flavour. 3 lines and you're good to go, you know how the day must feel. You drink your coffee like your script has said, and you become the character again you promised you would be. The extra thoughts you crumple like discarded paper to throw at trash bins: no thoughts on money, or sourcing, or consuming, but drinking your mug with no ties attached.

By this time, his mug shows the end with little grains of coffee. I drink mine quickly and find a ring marks midway the mug, proof I lost too much time in my own script.

## GROCERY (*fri.8.nov*)

Too long, it's been too long. Eating quinoa found in pantry corners and least favourite of my favourite vegetables nearly disintegrating in my fridge. I live alone and I can only carry so much on my own after one trip. I don't have much to scavenge in my own kitchen that's been mine since September 4. I still find some way to eat, or eat just enough.

I take a quick look around my studio: what do I need? I carry my recycling and trash down the back stairs. I throw one recycling and one trash bag once a month. Good numbers I would say, ignoring the small sample size of 2 months trial and the amount of food I eat vs. should be eating.

I continue down the street, a nice walk on the busy St.Laurent. I always enjoy these walks. They transition my work self to my life self: I walk in the city to carry regular errands with the rest of the city going about their regular errands. That is unless I grocery shop on a Friday night, then my kale and apples falling out of my bag is not the appropriate attire for the partying street.

The grocery door bell rings. I like the sound, reminiscent of my ideas of daily North American city-life back as a single-digit child in Arabia. The blue-haired cashier is working (my friend told me of the time he smoked with her behind the store listening to her vent about being a 30-something-year-old working at a grocery store). She doesn't know me, I'm a new regular. I know her, I wonder who else knows me while I don't know them.

I walk through the produce aisle. I pick up the usual in this order: peaches, spinach, broccoli, clementines, lemons (sometimes when I forget how many I have at home, I get more just in case. I have too many lemons.), apples. I grab some dates and feel like I'm shopping for my family as well (not my sole studio). I grab some soy milk (I opt for vanilla unsweetened, and soy although I know it isn't as good as oat but oat isn't as good as homemade but homemade isn't as efficient as local producers and local producers are mostly cows milk and and and...). I grab some soba noodles (I like noodles and I'm practicing how to use my chopsticks for my soon move to Tokyo). I wander through the tea aisle, reading all the beautiful ingredients, imagining what time of day I'd be drinking a vanilla liquorice green tea (I say midday, but I'm never home midday, I don't like to be still during the day. I say no to that tea.).

Best for last: I go down the yogurt aisle and stock up on containers of the good stuff. I didn't eat yogurt for 3 years straight. That resulted in a vegan label, a happy conscience, fuzzy headaches, pale skin, dark thoughts — I now eat yogurt in amounts like I am catching up on the missed years. It's quite alarming opening my fridge and seeing the ratio of yogurt to other food, realizing this is an abode of one, solo, uno. The plastic containers pile in my recycling bin. 50% of my recycling bin per month are yogurt containers. I could cut out my yogurt and cut down my trash. I could cut out a lot of things but if it's the only thing I eat, I feel I should at least keep it intact. I've accepted the scar for some good pleasure in my favourite meal.

I pay for items in the most efficient manner possible (I don't like to make the line wait too long behind). This means I'm often still fitting apples like Tetris in my bag as I walk onto St.Laurent. I walk back home, up the stairs, to my studio, to the kitchen, in the fridge I line in this order: apples, peaches, clementines, spinach, broccoli, milk, yogurt. I close the fridge and look around. This will do for the next week (but I hope it will do for much more for I'm not sure if I can go through those decisions again so soon. Maybe next time I'll try to get that coconut water.)

## *KITCHEN (sat.9.nov.)*

My fridge has been stocked. I see good fruits, good vegetables, some eggs and half-cut lemons. I should use that onion before it stinks up the whole kitchen aka. whole studio. I put my screaming kettle on the stovetop. My chopping board balancing on the counter/sink. I cut the vegetables up, at this point second nature.

This summer I experimented with eating 1 meal for as long as possible. Partly because I wanted to be in the new city (Amsterdam) as much as I could be, and because I didn't want to be home alone in the new city (Amsterdam). That means I ate lentil/potato/rice for May, tofu/broccoli/noodle for June, same for July, same for August. I found a deep appreciation for that noodle dish. In Montreal, I have the comfort of my own home and friends to impress. Therefore, every iteration of this dish experiments with a new component. Tonight: switching kimchi as a garnish to a foundational element alongside the frying onions (spoiler: I have adopted this in future iterations).

Simple ingredients becoming one complex meal (is it too far to say one complex ingredient?). I played this game as a child where I'd combine elements to make complex items (from H2O to glass panes to buildings). It was just another game for me, really. But 13 years later, I find myself more in awe of this concept. Single ingredients raised alone, each with their own flavours (complex on their own) and differences in texture or colour depending on how fresh it is, how far it travelled, how right I stored it in my fridge. To then combine it all, the same recipe, same backbone of the recipe, but experimenting with different processes. The same exact elements through and through (the same grocery store, the same quantity), but different combinations for different settings creating different iterations.

I never liked to cook because my mom complained it complicated, and my twin sister blanched all flavour out for standard meal prepped dishes (I'm talking bodybuilder chicken/broccoli/rice style — no pepper, no lemon, no spice. I do not know how we shared a womb together.). But the simplicity of ingredients to make the same meal with the TOUCH of a single change, a single process that changes the dish entirely. And it all depends on your intention and your search for the change.

The more iterations you follow, the fewer changes you have to make (the greater the rate of diminishing returns). But you then compare #n to #1 and see a world of a difference. I have no idea how I got here, no idea how I knew the flavours of these ingredients to know what goes together, but I kept combining and somehow got to this dish. It's great the way it is now, requires no more change. But what if, what if, I kept going and kept improving. What would I find out along the way? What evolutionary level would I reach and claim the journey was worth every step?

*BALCONY (sun.10.nov)*

It's about feeling removed. I can sit and watch scenes outside the window or within my head, narratives of strangers or memories, but they all feel the same. They all round the same with the same pitch of importance — negligence. It seem I can't even hold on to my memories and call them mine. That all I can trust in the current bind of pages in my hand, until they soak of hung words and I leave them to dry on dusty shelves or in empty suitcases. What I can see and believe is true, believe is me, is who I am at the moment and what I am doing in response to how I am feeling. There can be no planning if being genuine is the goal. That leaves spontaneity a necessity. Is this safe? Should I keep jumping and falling, claiming my identity in the same illness that steals me from my own memories?

And perhaps I'm allowing too much thought into this, I'm propping up mirrors around my bed and expecting myself to sleep as I study every breath of mine.

And suppose I placed the mirrors on the floor. There would be oceans under skies around, or fields of starry night flowers. I could see the apartments across me so easily. I could see the lit living room and the people that move within. I could see the bike that locks at the stop sign and the cars that still pass. I could see the stairs that illuminate ominously as if waiting for the person to drop by. If I could see this all, I did not see the person drop by. Again, this is supposing I could see this all.

FIELD (mon.11.nov.)

*It can be an ache in a foreign body,  
or a leak in some unknown part,  
it can soak everything in its dark embrace,  
and promise black is the only truth.*

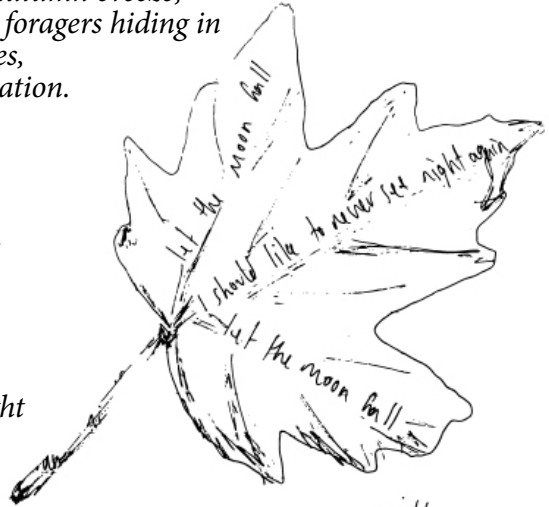
*And it can be the touch of an autumn breeze,  
the fall of a leaf too soon, little foragers hiding in  
piles of blood-shedded identities,  
the subtle embrace of disintegration.*

*To rid of the nights,  
I can only ride of the lights,  
tear my heart out and profess:  
"this life is the same no matter  
the lights or the night  
that fall outside."*

*I see what I am,  
the peaceful observer in the light  
the empty form at night,  
are but the same:*

*shadows hide whatever glint of passion  
light carried so effortlessly on me.*

*So the thought to rid the moon  
to let only sun shine, but incongruent  
to what can actually be,  
and who I actually am.*



*with  
me  
tonight.*

-

When did we start imagining to buy homes and sell them to others?  
When did it become a norm to do so? In what culture or context did it  
first become standard and desirable?

We forfeited our rights over shelter and food in the name of the great  
tamer of humanity: money for civilization with that, we permitted  
ourselves to ascend into wealth and merit with knowledge and creations.  
But it has strayed to those who mindlessly consume and those discarded  
with no chance to grasp what they deserve as a live human being.

WALK (tue.12.nov)



A morning walk to campus. My bike still has a flat. I should drop by and get it checked, the man is a nice man, doesn't overspeak or overfluff words. Clear and simple, but I feel like walking anyways.

I walk towards campus. The sun is shy and hides behind the clouds. What started as a sepia morning is now a grey day. I don't mind. It seems the shades of brown were collected by the buildings on the way. I stop and watch a tree wave slightly, its little fruits protruding from the bricks behind, its trunk rising from the foundation below. I like how the tree camouflages even in the urban neighbourhood. A simple arrangement of highlights and shadows reveal the tree right in front of the background,

but other than that it might as well have been built with the buildings behind.

I walk through an alley to change up the route. I pass by a postman, catch his eyes and smile. He nods and looks to his package again. I walk by a man who waits at a front door. As if he's awaiting a special woman to profess his love with his feet planted firmly in the ground right in front of her home. But it's 9am, and might be too early for that. I suppose he just forgot his keys and waits to get welcomed in.

I walk through the streets and cross to walk on the street on campus. A little act of freedom, it seems, to walk where tires were meant to be. Students pass all around, all walking different paces in different outfits to different buildings. It's a bit warmer today though, so the routes are not as clearly cut. I find people stopping or taking detours for extra time outside. It feels the melted snow has melted default paths, now the choice is lent back to us to walk where we please. I walk on the street on campus while I can, not on bike nor on ice, but with my own two feet.

I walk looking up at buildings that rise. I feel little in a good way. Things rise from people who rise to build them. They stay up, even if I fall one evening. They coexist with the trees nearby, seem to dress like the trees nearby. If I can walk through these streets and see these buildings, I can also still feel the trees and admire their beauty. I can still build myself in an academic sense while still nurturing the instinctual beliefs of my own.

DAY (*wed.13.nov.*)

I rode my bike for the first time since the fall (snow + depression). How light, how free! The cold air kissing your knuckles and camaraderie salutes of fellow bikers on the road. It's a whole other way of experiencing the city in this weather. You find the others crazy enough to be out there. How enticing, that you are free no matter the elements, that you are still you with your bike no matter what.

I see it an interesting connection between last night's thoughts and this morning's feelings. I put on a Chopin record over breakfast. There was construction out my door, in my renovating building, but sounds not loud enough to drown the melody. The cafe now plays classical music. There is a hum of the city's wake in moving streets and clattering mugs. There is continuity in sounds, in feelings, not just a figment of my imagination.

It is different. It seems the system has fixed itself. Myself is not a sphere rolling loosely within my shell. The nerves have found their endings again in their skin, my skin. I see my memories playing out. I do not feel alien to myself, do not look around my clothes and my words and my house and my friends and wonder who I am to fool them again. I held my face in the mirror this morning and watched a flame begin in my eyes and cascade warmth to the rest of my body.

I am trying to go about this slowly. I do not want to run with it and find myself isolated on another polar extreme. I am approaching with one foot on the ground at all times. I cannot let the ground slip away from me to find my rest on no solid ground.

Where do I go from here? I feel no desire to describe the furnishing of the hole I've slept in these past weeks. I feel the duty to eradicate it from my mind, to release in dead ink, but it will never suffice: these live feelings cannot be inscribed lifeless.

And so, it is the same feeling that has passed generation to generation, the genetics for emotional capability yet lack of ability to conquer. This, the lasting gnawing presence of the known but unknowable in words or reasons and omnipresence to sole reason for anything, is the seal of a human existence.

Bit by bit, step by step, I feel the good in my life, I see the good in my life: good people, good connections, good conversations. The simplicity of enjoying the presence of people who see you. There is goodness here, there always has been goodness here. I can see it again, I can feel it again, bit by bit.

*You lay on the floor  
see no shadows played on the wall  
hear all sounds echoed in your head  
you, just you, you, you, you,  
so you make up versions of you  
to keep you (you, you, and you) company.*

*You sit by the window,  
find cars that go by,  
find people in cars that go by,  
you watch those people,  
those faces (not you, not you, not you).*

*There is so much more than you  
but they all have the ability  
to feel like you do:  
they all have their themselves  
(themselves, themselves, themselves).*

And remains, these thoughts of a girl writing to herself in a cafe: some ritual.

*GYM (thu.14.nov)*



I find a tree chained to a building. I find a mountain caged between buildings. Nature trying to breath, hold on under the weight of the world around.

Today is a day to shower so I head to the gym for that reward. I like going to the gym, actually. What started to feel less numb years ago has become a revitalizing activity. I feel like a child again, leaping across monkey bars or slamming medicine balls. Being a scrawny kid picked last for every sport except dodgeball (I was really good at dodging balls), building my own strength feels pretty sick. I blast my music in my ears and blast my numb away. I end up exhausted, my walk back home is pure bliss for no thoughts run in my head (they've all gone to bed). I go home to shower and stay a few minutes longer under the water. I feel like a child back in the ocean with my parents on the sand, my sandcastle still standing.

I look at the pictures I took on my way to the gym:

- A tree with a chain around it (I'm not sure what that is, but I hear no bad thought.)
- A mountain resting at home with my home of these buildings around (I hear no bad thought.)



*BAR (fri.15.nov.)*

I found a friend of a friend. More so, I found a profile of a friend through the profile of my friend online. I went to the bar to grab drinks with them.

I wanted to bike for the snow finally melted. It's either me being warm or free. I picked free, wore my long coat, caught it in the tire, punctured the tube. I took an Uber instead.

We stand for multiple minutes at the door waiting for a table to free. There are many people inside, many people I've never seen before, many people probably there every Friday night anyways. I could come by every Friday night if desired to spot the familiar faces, collect more characters.

We sit at the table by our knees the entire standing wait. For 3 straight hours, we talk. I feel my watch (I don't have a watch) might as well have froze, it didn't matter what time it was. It didn't matter how cold it was. It didn't matter how loud it was. There are 3 of us round a small table for 3 hours in a large bar.

I find a groove in the conversation, somewhere between ancient paintings' interpretation to modern buildings' deterioration, to go to the bathroom. I catch a face in the mirror. She looks like she found a secret in a book, a loonie on the floor, a voice in the dark. She is smiling.

We rise to walk the night down St.Laurent. We watch the characters walk by intoxicated or bundled in fabric. I listen to our conversations: previously theoretical, now practical. We look at the art in the (g)alle(r)ys and the construction on the streets. They laugh and I laugh a second after. I thought it was a dream until I remembered I could laugh and be part of it, too.

*SATURDAY (sat.16.nov)*

(I'm not going to get into feeling because (1) I don't want to get carried away, (2) don't want to lose my joy, (3) don't want to overdo regular emotions. There are just moments I write to process as real. Writing objectively helps not carry myself away so third person limited works best.)

1. She woke at 9am sharp, jolted right up bed like a zombie resurrecting to life. The studio was sunny, partially cold but exaggerated the warmth of her blankets. She held the glance of the white wall across feeling something only recognizable a few seconds later under contemplation: joy.

2. She turns to her phone, reading missed texts. He headed to the diner for his breakfast already. She missed greasy eggs and coffee pots by 40 minutes. She apologizes through sleepy texts and falls back on bed: she now has to make her own breakfast.

3. Peanut butter toast, she thinks of the comfort of sleep last night. A mug of water, she thinks of the long night last night. Milk, she thinks of the beer last night. Out of fruits, she thinks of the grocery store she passed on her walk last night down the street of booze and bolster with two good people in the freezing cold. In silence at home, she thinks of the noise of the bar and the voices of her friends' thoughts clearer and louder after every glass.

4. She finds her face in the bathroom mirror and feels the joy sitting well in its place. She wears her mask and wears her costume, and decides she would like to wear her hair as well. She chips, she chops, and hair collects in the bowl. She watches her head get lighter, her shoulders brighter, as her eyes release after every loss of the unnecessary. She finds her face in the bathroom mirror and sees the joy sitting well in its place.

5. She walks the streets with minor notes to adhere: her bike needs a pump and the neighbourhood café needs a look. She pumps her bike wheel, passes said cafes on the way, and finds herself peering at the buildings unmoving since she moved here. She looks up at the bricks, the wood, the glass that age much slower than her shoes, her thoughts, her self. She walks through everyday to witness the change of the scene: snow or leaves or construction or sun; but she watches the change of her eyes and thoughts and feelings that age much faster than the buildings that stay standing. She watches the stones change colour and alleys change contents, but her sights are filtered by her rapidly aging eyes, and her feelings by her aging experiences, and her thoughts by her aging knowledge. She walks the streets with minor notes of what has changed, to go home and take off her costume and let the change happen unrestricted. She wakes again and finds another feeling finding its place.

*FALL (sun.17.nov.)*

It might be the last nice **FALL** day. It's chilly but sunny, leaves dancing in the tickles of light filtering to the ground. Leaves fluttering, squirrels digging, it is the preparation of the hibernation to come. It is the time to accept and let be. Renewal shall come only to those who have shed their expired disguises.

I notice the delicacies of my life, the subtle yet poignant reactions I held as a child. They still live in me today. But instances of timidness or ambivalence arise in moments of unease. Then I feel my autonomy and genuinity taken from me, I tend to spin in my own cocoon of insanity, with anger or sadness, copious amounts of it, suffocating me.

If anything, it makes sense. It reserves a peaceful understanding in myself. I've always held some notion of melancholia or removed position to observe. I've always been open to choices because they never felt so impertinent to my position, that of observation. Interestingly, in this position, I still feel the weight of emotions more strongly than in regular roles. I'm unsure if it's due to my delicate senses that my unassuming position acts as a coping method, or if the realm of an individual drama protects the fabric of this identity.

Either way, I've been told not to search for truth unless it **FALLs** apparent in front of me. I can say the same about thoughts. I must not think too much when not based on items of reality. This act of observing and writing is good for me, it's good to anchor my thoughts on real things to see what is real or another narrative of my mind.

*LUNCH (mon.18.nov)*

I sit outside. It is -2°C. I am wearing a thin raincoat and no gloves (it was hot in my studio this morning and I'm not a fan of gloves). I sit here eating my brie and mustard sandwich. Super Sandwich is a commendable operation. A long line that never stops moving, I feel no rush in it, no constraint, no waste of time. It moves and promises a reward of a good sandwich for the wait. I find myself rushing a lot indoors or in lines or in places I feel no freedom to move myself. I eat my Super Sandwich feeling Super, really.

I sit outside. That awkward balcony that juts over lower-part of Lower Field, right by McLennan's entrance. I eat my sandwich facing the field. I see a man jogging across the Y-Intersection, but his torso cut off by the hand rail in my foreground. His legs float levelled like an escalator dragging him through. He's a runner, I can tell. He has practiced enough to know how to run by instinct, and run efficiently.

I sit outside eating my sandwich, my preferred lunch spot. No spot in particular, just the concept of being outside. Yes, there is ice under my feet as I write so my sandwich crumbs might feed the lucky birds who are fast (or preserve for the squirrels in the new season). But I eat out here because there is freedom. There are no lines, no containments, no made-up processes that fail at being efficient. I am out here where my wet shoes will dry in the sun and my escaped crumbs will feed the brave squirrels. The process is simple and easy with complete efficiency. I feel no loss, no guilt for operating out here where every waste becomes a resource. Every practice becomes an instinct.

I sit outside (an instinct) and eat (and instinct) my sandwich (an instinct to want to feel Super) as I hear the library door open and close without end (an instinct to deteriorate no matter what) and the conversations of the passing students (an instinct to release their frustrations or accomplishments). I sit trying not to think (an instinct) over too many things (a bad instinct) so I write instead (a wonderful instinct) and I sit instead outside.

*STAIRWELL (tue.19.nov.)*

It's time for lunch, at least I pick this time arbitrarily as I know I won't grab lunch if I didn't force myself to. I go down 6 floors by stairs. My legs feel good moving, my knees a bit shy. I notice my vision going a bit blurry. I need to book that eye appointment and go grocery shopping — or I might push them for another week.

I decide on the grilled vegetables and goat cheese sandwich. Almost a coffee too, but it won't help my headache nor help the additional cup-to-go (to-the-bin). I take the elevator up with a minor inconvenience of stationary wait. Being still is uncomfortable for me. On the 6th, I go to the stairwell to sit and eat my sandwich.

A girl is on her phone pacing up and down the steps. She sounds frustrated on the verge of tears. She wants to go into law school but knows her grades won't help her. Her phone listener seems to try to calm her down, but she doesn't feel understood. It seems she wants to do what she was told to do, to get a good degree and a good job to live a good life. But the preconditions aren't right, so is the rest still right for her? She hangs up and continues down the steps.

My sandwich is not wrapped, just put in the brown paper bag. Part of me relaxes for no messy plastic, other part feels the oil staining through the bag on my fingers.

Half a floor above me, opposite of where the other girl stood, I catch the eyes of a guy. He's on the phone as well. He looks at me with a calm yet concentrated face. Still lips, he must be listening to a friend's rant. I turn back to my sandwich to eat in peaceful silence. I would be nervous to have someone watch me behind my back (I feel I do that enough to myself). I look back again to make sure and he still is calm on the phone. I eat my sandwich in peace.

My stomach is full or the bag is empty, whatever comes first beckons my torso to rise. I throw the bag and wash my fingers. I go back to my desk to write this.

*STREETS (wed.20.nov)*

I walk feeling the leaves crunch under my feet. I see brick walls extend up to the tree crowns but no further. Bark wins again. I see the textures of the strayed planks and battered furniture on the streets and cannot help but think how free of responsibility they are. No ownership, no commitment to own, care, or dispose of. Simply disregarded, abandoned on public domain. Intention passed to Nature to decay or Institution to remove.

It rained last night so the streets are still damp. But they have scattered as battle wounds the broken umbrellas on every street corner. Today I found one shoved in a bin in the alley, one in a bin in the bathroom, one broken into stems on the street. No stems of a tree were found discarded. No trunks of a tree found abandoned. The feathers, yes, of the canopy were plucked, but that means the leaves just fell in greater succession than the Fall season intended. They fall and trees do not bend to pick them back up. The rain, it seems, waits still on our still asphalt and we bend to pick up our umbrella pieces.

Step out onto the streets and you will find buildings built by anonymous (plural) for future people like you (plural). There is a world out there, so I've been told, where the bricks have been placed in an order so precise to have conjured a home. I leave my house to watch these homes rise in front of me. I enjoy watching home, dreaming of home that could belong to anyone, maybe even my own.

The idea, however, of moving here to "study." It is more than just "study." To have the permission (authoritative parents and authoritative government) to enter this city, to choose a building built by many in the past, to sign a little paper and play "House" for a few months. I move here as a person with my own playhouse and playdates and play for fun. I walk through the streets to look at these buildings all done and I wonder how different this city-life would have been with no buildings or fewer roads. I see how my experience of this city right now is due to my freedom, my ability to roam the streets alone. If confronted, the authorities' (both) numbers will save me. And again, am I left alone to use the resources of those past who built these homes for future families (whether extended or not).

*MORNING (thu.21.nov.)*

There is warmth. I wake up bundled quite tightly, quite nicely in my blankets. The birdsong has woken me up again (my alarm has been birdsongs for 4 years now). A soft light touches my bedside table. The sun has kissed the city to wake. The sun's pink lips leave a trace on my walls.

There is warmth in my bundled blankets that unwrap. The dreams of last night release from my lips. In a car with my family to Montreal. In the living room with my family in Amman. On the beach with my family in Abu Dhabi. I woke up many times in the night between these dreams — sometimes too hot, too cold, acclimating to the weather changes.

A few mornings ago, my parents told me they were moving again. They are moving to Montreal. This means I have to change my concept of Home for the 4th time in 3 years. This means my dad moves back to his periodic home in Labrador. This means my mom warms a new place as Home in Montreal. This means our family Home in Amman becomes a home for the family. This means our belongings from our Home in Abu Dhabi go back to their Home in their boxes. This means the summer thoughts of my Home in Amsterdam were valid enough: that Montreal was my Home for the people and places and projects. I just didn't suppose it would be validated that fast with my parents moving into my Home city for the first time without me.

I can worry about which home to call Home, but I have a grand list of choices with a family that lets me move. I need not worry where Home is if I still have my memories in my dreams and the warmth in my family. My bed can be found in any corner of a room, and I shall still be ok. The sun will still kiss my eyes and birdsongs will still sing me to rise.

