

A BEGINNING

LOOK

This is what goes through the teen-age brain when confronted with stuff 3500 years older than the internet:

Last time I checked Snapchat, Gunnar and Martha had both opened my video and now it's been, like, two hours so WHY haven't anyone responded to it? It was SO funny, with the mustache-filter and my voice, like, super deep.. They probably watched it and didn't get it or maybe they thought it was lame, and too soon or some bullshit like that.. Like I'm the only one without racial sensitivity in class?! And now on Monday, everyone is either going to totally ignore me, or completely attack me and maybe even tell Ralph I'm making fun of him for being part-Ghanese. And Ralph is so adorable when he runs with his hand holding up his jeans because he doesn't want to wear a belt, and I remember the way he looked at me when I made my dramatic entrance at Beate's going away-party, by the way - WHERE did that top go?, I bet mom threw it out when she discovered the puke or blood or whatever it was on it - STUPID COW, I miss that top. Is that supposed to be a boat? That's hilariuos, I should make an incredible Snap-video now, like zooming in on the boat and adding my head in to be, like, the crew, and then write "Just sailing to my death of boredom", HAHAHA.



VIEW

This is one way of describing a view, any view, to a blind friend, if they want it:

From where we're standing, the soggiess of the ground continues for about three more minutes, or around ninety steps in either direction. If we choose a straight line from our noses, we eventually come to a little creek that we can easily cross over, then the wind is probably going to pick up from the left because then we won't have the shelter of the distant forest any more. There, the ground is a mixture of grass tufts and roots, so we'll be slowing down the pace quite a bit. If we continue on from there, the ground will drop into a slippery slope all the way down to the rocks and the sea - which is so big today, by the way.



DEAD

Completely ignoring my own instincts, I finally opened the doors and went into the great entrance hall of Hammersmith & Kahn. A rush of ventilated air blew down my perfectly styled hairdo, and I awkwardly jumped a few steps further in, frantically wiping aside the escaped hairs in my eyes. I immediately regretted my decision, looking around and discovering the snake of a line over a hundred people long. This was going to take most of the day, and optimistically I had not packed anything for lunch. Something brushed my back, and I quickly made for the back of the line, but when I looked back, safely installed, there was no one. It must have been the automatic doors opening, then. After a while, I fell into the same paper-dry rhythm of steps, the atmosphere settling once more, slowly draining all energy and thought. For a room this big, the sounds were somehow more muffled and intimate, as if everyone were made aware of their own acoustic influence, and thus held it back, swallowed in sweaty suits and newspapers unopened. I needed to pee, but to risk my place in the line now was out of the question. Another five people had joined the line behind me. At least, I think it was five - it was hard to remember when they had arrived, or if they had made any type of noise or disturbance at all. I resisted the urge to turn around again for fear of discovering the same *absence* from earlier, but I was more sure this time that I was no longer the last man in line. When I reached the first landing of the staircase, a natural opportunity arrived for a glance back. Relief flooded through me, as the entire entrance hall was packed to the brim with people. Some were looking up at me, but most faces were turned away in thought and concentration. The woman directly behind me was dwarfishly short, although even *thinking* that term gave me a shameful blush, so I sheepishly winked at her and faced forward again. I checked my watch, another hour to go and it would probably be my turn, given the length of the interviews so far. And it was then I realised that none of the candidates had come back out. The line just kept going forward, one person at a time, slowly but determinately. I could always leave, try another company another day, but something held me back, something like stubbornness or curiosity. The door at the end of the corridor kept swallowing people, at a quicker interval I noticed, as if something had spurred it on. This was getting exciting. I went through the opening line in my head, wiping a clammy hand on my thigh, plucking some lint off my shoulder, doing the same rituals as the rest of the line when they came this close. Just four remained in front of me now. My tummy rumbled loudly, making the man in front of me shift somewhat, but no other reaction came. Embarrassment now added to my nerves, I finally started to get impatient. The door opened again, an arm waved the next person in, and quietly shut again. I closed my eyes, concentrating on my line - "*Hey, I'm Daniel, any last wishes?*"



TREE

Did you hear it? It must have fallen down sometime during the night. A great shame, really, uncle Peach planted it during the -30's. He had a dispute with the neighbor about the property line, so he solved it by planting a great, big tree right on the border. The neighbor never spoke to him again.



POOL

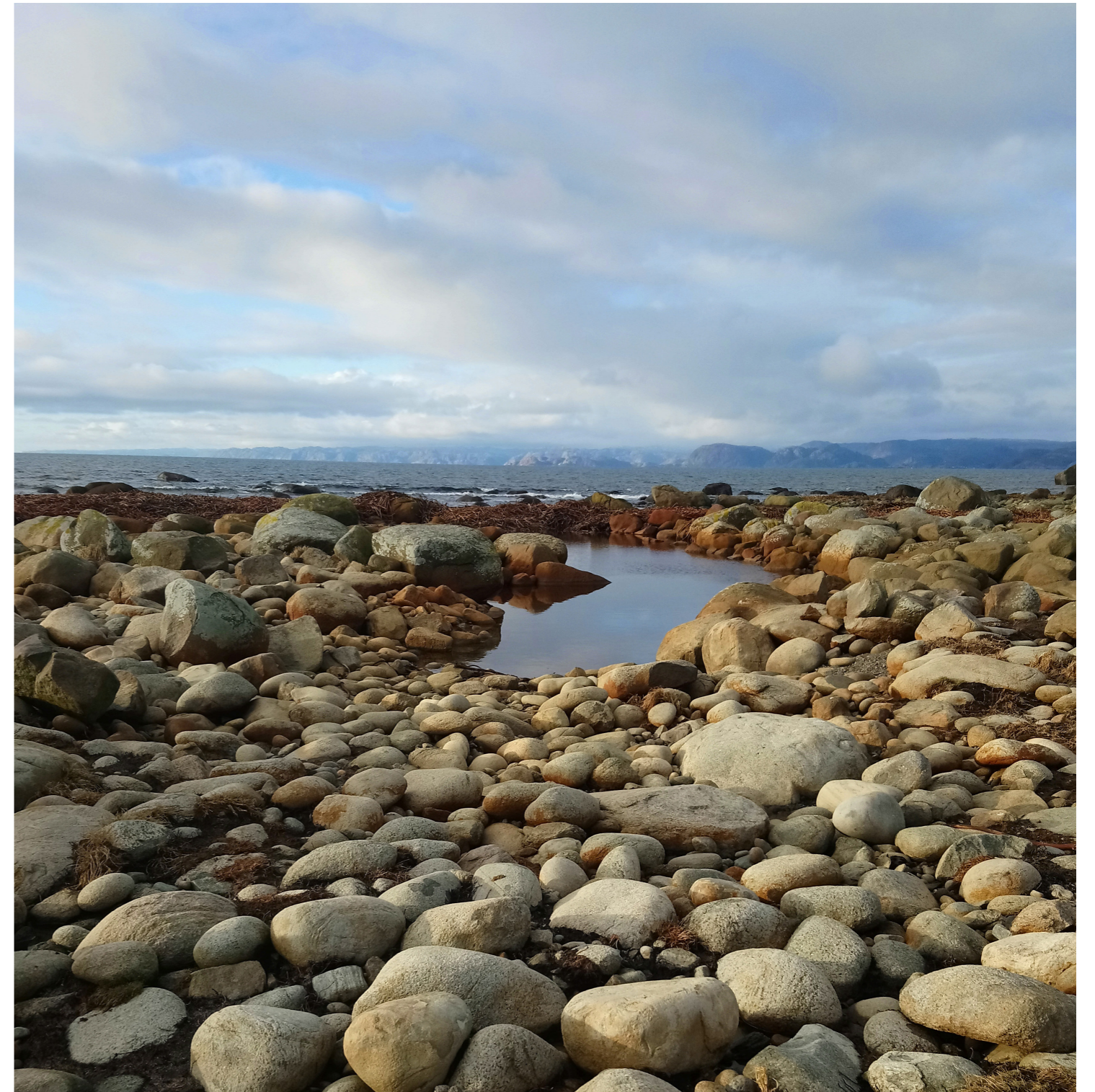
Edith was the name of the demented lady who died last week after diving head first into the empty swimming pool in the Dartmoor-facility. I had never met her, but knew that she used to work in my aunt's gardening program for youths-at-risk. When I heard about her death, I remember thinking it must have been such a glorious moment. The upside of dementia being that time is not perceived linearly, Edith was suddenly back in her younger days, going for a swim in the pool like she used to, no fear, no angst or confusion, just simply the greatest urge and easy act of jumping in. If we all could choose our deaths, I think many of us would do something similar. I try not to think about these things too much, though, it really darkens the mood and I have one of those faces where emotion is explicitly obvious. It's 'God's way of keeping me from lying', mom says. The pool is sealed off now, and sometimes when I walk the dog at night, I take a longer route to see it. I was never a wimp, but even I have to admit that if the facility wasn't creepy enough before, it certainly is now with the green tarp stretching over the gaping cavity, and a new wire fence embracing the scene like a shrine. And the stillness, thick and almost corporeal. It's as if the pool has finally become what it was always meant to be; it feels *right*.

One can place too much soul in dead things, I know, it's a way of not feeling so lonely - but this place, and this incident, it really created something. I look down at my dog, and *he* knows it too. How fortunate we are to live here, so close to this mystery.



ROCK

A game of whispers among rocks, passed unnoticed from hard surface to brittle surface. This is how Philomena Von Trim imagined conversations underfoot as she walked the grounds of the abbye. All the miniscule cracks and pops as gossip and scandal was laid bare to every stone and pebble around. She knew she was the only human being with the ability to understand the life of the hard earth, and how rude everyone else was to trampel ungratefully around as if nothing held them up. She was careful not to look down as she moved, letting her bare feet do the listening. She felt them strain and moan as her enormous weight pushed them down, but they were also quick to forget, and as soon as she had passed, they went back to whispering again. Over the years she had learnt so much about the world outside the abbye, a place she had never seen, by walking the grounds. She knew more about the sisters and Mother Superior than she frankly needed, but the wealth of knowledge made her feel good, and she could help her friends more easily now that she knew about their concerns and hopes without the delay of a trusted conversation. She had aquired a reputation of being touched by God, and the abbye started recieving pilgrims eager for a blessing of knowledge. Philomena refused them all, never meaning to extend her special secret beyond the convent. Knowing about the outer world, and actually meeting it, are completely different things. Also, the stones never stopped whispering, and sometimes the shock of a certain truth could overwhelm her completely, leaving her sick with fever, sleeping for days. Yet she would continue the walks for the rest of her life, silently in awe of the endlessness of changes.



STAY

The opposite of an elemental force is not the remnants of the material stubbornly refusing the force's concentrated power to obliterate, it is however what exists the milliseconds before the strike hits. The spacetime completely unmolested by, or even uninterested in, the devastation of it's being.

One such elemental force is called Ned. His aspect is chocolate-driven. His powerful impacts are felt throughout the building when his wrath is made manifest. This happens every Wednesday, when the nurse arrives. They always find his contraband of sweets, however expertly hidden. Ned suspects they are in league with his nemesis, the Cauliflower. Ned's powers grow at night. He can actually see in the dark, if he concentrates really hard and adjusts his vision by staring into a corner for a long time. Then he takes out his well deserved treasures and puts some of them in his bespoke chocolate-eating hole, while stealthily moving around in search of a new hiding place either on the floor or in the ceiling. The Cauliflower-nurses have a tendency to start looking around at furniture-level, where Ned never really spends much time, being an elemental force of Superior Elevation and Profound Understanding. The rest of the week, Ned concerns himself with alterior versions of being and existing, alternating between the two as it pleases him. Bacterial interruptions in his flow, so called *family visits*, immediately deflates his genius, rendering him corporally bound in a sitting position, unable to conjure his Banishing Spell, but instead heightening his aural comprehension to a point where language erupts unhindered. Ned loves and hates voices in equal measure, making it extremely difficult to choose his own. The anticipation of one, in the aforementioned millisecond before the strike, is his favorite feeling, and this makes him grin widely with his facial image. As to the devastation that follows... well, his mother is very proud of him nomatter what.



LIVE

And here we are, my darling, finally in the ground. Are your feet cold? No matter. You will soon forget, I imagine. They really dug us a fine cairn, didn't they? Very fine indeed. Spacious, solid and with pretty white stones glittering like stars in the ceiling, I like that. Yes, this will do nicely for us. It took us a while to get here, didn't it love? Oh, my, didn't it just? First, they drag us out from the hut, all bloody and shredded to pieces, you even lost your head, you remember? Haha, they really made a mess, those animals. Not to worry dear, you still look beautiful to me. Then the sea came to claim us, and we floated around in the shallows for days. I hated that, I have to be honest, I was never a strong swimmer - as you well know. All that tangled seaweed and slimy fish. Bah. However, it did give us an interesting complexion, don't you think? A certain angelic likeness almost, especially you my darling, I really must say. Then the flood season brought us back on land, and wasn't that a relief? It felt so refreshing to dry out again. And those clever birds circling above us, drawing our relatives to find us. Oh, what a happy sound, those wails and cries. They had really missed us, wouldn't you say? And so, our journey came to an end. I'm so glad it did. It would have been terribly boring if it just went on. What did you say, love? *Shut up?!*



HERE

Following the incident at the Brocklehurst Foundation, Hubert Benzano felt a tension in his shoulders whenever he walked the woods in the morning. There was a fresher sound to the wind, and a damp sort of heat that he had never experienced this time of year. His pigs were renowned truffle sniffers, and he could always trust them to discover new areas on the forest floor where the white gold waited patiently for him. Another year like the one past, and he could be set up for an early retirement in the south. Wet, pungent soil squished beneath his boots, and he cocked his rifle in case a wild boar showed up. Again, he felt the hairs on the back of his neck rise unexpectedly. A soft sound like a humming or a yammering came from somewhere to his left. He strained his eyes for a look without moving his head, and thought he saw a shape close to the brambled undergrowth. A pheasant or a brown hare, perhaps? He had reached the part of the woods where the trees were bigger, older and grew further apart. Shadows in all shades of green and blue drifted across his face, the pigs turned into wabby clouds of grey and black up ahead. His eyesight was getting worse every day, but his instincts were as sharp as always, and his pigs did not show signs of stress or fright. His foot caught on something, and he nearly fell over. A root of an old lindentree, gnarled and twisted, its great trunk spanning more than four men could embrace. Hubert cursed the pain, and put his rifle down. He recognized this tree, it was one of the oldest, and he'd often used it as a point of orientation in the early days. He sat down and started rummaging through his bag, pulled out a waterbottle and drank deeply. His pigs were looking at him. "Go back to work, pigs, I'm just having a rest." None of them moved. A shuddering crack sounded from above, and a huge branch fell down in Hubert's lap, crushing his hip and thighs. Hubert howled, pinned to the ground. A creature appeared through his blurred vision of tears, a tall figure, moving casually among the pigs, who had started squealing loudly. The figure bent down to peer at him. *Mrs. Brocklehurst?* It was incredibly hard to concentrate, but Hubert felt sure he recognized the old lady. And suddenly the memory of a whimpering *something* in the undergrowth came back to him. Of course, it was never an animal, he should have known. It was getting hard to breath. The heavy branch seemed to have settled completely across him now, with twigs and tiny roots digging around him, pulling him slowly down in the cold dirt. The figure held out something, right beneath his nose. Through excruciating pain and bloody coughs, the familiar smell of a ripe, white truffle gave Hubert his last smile.



AN END

