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from “The Yesterday Project”

07.24.14

Yesterday we woke in Goleta a few times. We had passed out from the driving fatigue, and we woke up twice. I was glad to see you had the TV on. We watched radio sports anchors talk into their microphones. Mike and Mike. One bigger than another. You noticed that one Mike in their logo was bolded. I walked the grounds looking for concessions, H₂O. Ended up at a nearby Sonoco, bought two bottles of water from a funny guy. Returned incredibly proud of myself. We went back to sleep, in an expensive hotel under construction.

We woke again, later—we had slept in! I took the dogs out to the tumult of the hotel they were building right around us. They were using diesel saws to cut the pavement in half. Workers everywhere, fumes and falling dust. \$200. I worried about how we might come off in this project with our little bougie details. Ronald shat under the hedge. We returned. We watched a news channel we had never seen before, one where they talked about Nestlé bottling desert water in twenty-minute interviews with brilliant women. It totally passed the Bechdel test. You and I walked to get açai bowls and to survey the renovation.

We ate our delicious superfood bowls. Prepared for a swim. Went to the pool. Saw the cloud of chemicals, the rusty light floating there. Changed our plans. Smelled acetate everywhere, got lightheaded, got high. Time to split.

Another detail: we weren’t going to our real house, we were going to our other place: our land in Landers, the place we bought to get away. I drove. You called Pappy’s to get a table in two days, left a message. Some band is playing. Desert chic hipster super saloon. I drove through steadily browner mountains. You wrote an incredible letter to the hotel chain that is buying our renovated hotel. I could hear our money coming back to us. Teamwork.

I drove. You were on your phone—reading me the backlash many adopters felt when parenting interracially. You read me how we would have to train our family, ourselves. How difficult it was, has always been. How there

The Yesterday Project is a blind collaboration: the authors each separately wrote a document recording the previous day, every day, for thirty-two days, without sharing their work. There were no constraints except that each piece had to begin with the word “yesterday,” and no discussion of the writing, process, or content was permitted before or after. The collaboration took place in the shadow of a diagnosis of life-threatening illness: Melanoma cancer, Stage 3.

are so many things you cannot say, how every word must be controlled so as not to hurt deeper than we could imagine. I listened to a 90s hero, Mac from Superchunk talk about his label's, Merge's, 25th anniversary on the satellite radio. Thought of the scenes I grew up in, DIY mixed with all the badness of youth, but with politics. Would I hate me now?

Yesterday we rambled the artist's lives, without making any art. We stopped at a health food store in the middle of the desert. I ate an apple, drank coconut water, ate something called a coconut square, some kale chips. I thought a little about the tumor I had, about the cells in me that I could kill with the apple. You drove the last hour and a half. I looked at the Buffalo Bills training camp updates on my phone—the prized rookie had made an amazing one-handed catch that had gone viral. I looked out the window, thought about the desert, how all these enormous box stores had gotten here.

We got to our palace in Landers. It was wonderful. Hot. Ours. I carried everything in from the car, you put everything away. I twisted hammock hooks into two trees in the shade, moved our hammocks there. You hobbled out on your bum knee. We laid on hammocks in the shade in the heat. You said holy shit. You saw a coyote and sprang to chase it off. It was so cute. K went crazy. Tried to crawl under the fence. We let her have it, played fierce loving parent. She was good and sorry.

Yesterday I started to understand how to simultaneously make beans and rice in the same pressure cooker. It was good and clean. I did my martial arts video workout. You tried yoga, but your poor knee.

We read. You: some book about Jacques Tati. Me: *Text for Nothing, On Certainty*. A cricket chirped everywhere, amplified, and we couldn't find it.

July 24, 2014

Yesterday: two large rocks painted white. Stacked on top of each other on the side of the desert road. Spray painted in blue scrawl: TUBS.

A pile of trash on Happy Trail. Open dark plastic trash bag and signs of human. Plastic wrapping for toilet paper. Plastics.

A woman and her teenage daughter in line at BJ's Health Foods. Her man comes up behind her, begins patting her on her waist and hips. Large hips. He keeps patting almost like a child, or like dough. Patting and patting.

He runs to get something at the other end of the store. The girl in Spanish tells him to hurry I think, motions him impatient. He runs back just in

time, playful, gets his item in for check-out. Pats his lady on the hips. Then he moves around and pokes the girl in her back where her bra strap would be. She recoils in a sharp move, scolds him, not having it.

We drive from where the green turns into all blue sea and empty yellow beaches. I remember we saw a dead seal there years ago. Ronald Johnson found it, sniffed it. That was before Kiki Smith, on our trip to Chicu and Suzanne's wedding when our car was broken into and everything got stolen because we didn't use the valet at the fancy hotel in the big city San Francisco. We never made it to the wedding. Instead I think we drove all night and broke down in Iowa with a clutch. Your dad saved us with money.

Then the beaches turn into rock hills and desert when I look up again. You drive, I research transracial adoption. It's a problem, mainly because white people and Christianity and privilege. You can't shut the child down, you will never understand, negative capability. Whatever you do will not be enough, it's important to note.

I drive us from Hesperia to Landers, we are so glad to be here, not in the grey rented house but in our own modern cabin with stained green concrete floors, modern blue sectional couch, plywood table on saw horses. Orange mod molded chairs. The view of the hills we are inside a Western.

You move the hammocks from under the deck to under the trees. It's been too long since we've been inside a hammock, more than a week.

I see a coyote out of the side of my eyes and for some reason I jump up and run over to him. We look at each other, me and the coyote, who is the size of Kiki Smith but brown. With a more waspy face, fine upturned nose and slenderness. We look in each other's eyes. I shoo him off and feel bad about it, some maternal disease. Kiki Smith tries to crawl out to find him. Ronald Johnson doesn't notice or doesn't care.

You move the hammocks back under the deck when the shade comes. The sun is already down and the sky is turning orange on all sides. The show starts. It cools down and a breeze. Ronald and Kiki come running from the end of the land. They are running so fast I don't know how they'll stop but they do. They drink water. We all play fetch.

My knee is terrible now I can't even do yoga. You box in the bedroom and make rice and beans in the pressure cooker, together, spicy. We eat in front of a view. Boulder hills and many shades of brown expanse and sky.

We turn on the dog's lights and let them run. Kiki goes all the way to the back, so far away you have to go corral her. We don't look at the stars for long. I finish a book on Jacques Tati. You bring me a cold pack in a towel. I wake up a few times hallucinating bugs or feeling them.

When we got here there was a very large camel spider in the kitchen sink in the drain on his back. Clear white with articulated joints and digits, scalpel pincers. We smashed him, but we let the cricket crick under our bed all night.

07.25.2014

Yesterday was a desert day, a day spent acknowledging your knee and its troubles. I woke up, let the dogs out to run this five acre fenced plot of ours, made some tea. This place is home now, one of our homes, and I can feel the peace on a cellular level. No internet. No TV. Just distances and a house to work on.

I made the best smoothie ever. I have the recipe down now. It involves a lot of raw organic cacao powder, which is somehow healing. I slathered myself in sesame oil to keep from burning out there. We drank our smoothies out back and typed about yesterday. The sun was coming over the house, making the table I was typing on brighter and hotter, encroaching on my laptop. I moved it onto my knee. You saw that and let me have it a bit, which I deserved, about the toxic fields around these machines, the poisons they are made of, how since you've known me I've always had a device of some kind touching my body, how the cancer must be from my intimacy with Apple products. You're right. I thought of how I'd lie back on the couch with my iPad so often, digging it into my flesh as a kind of stand, how the bad cells must love that, how it must inflame the area even now.

Yesterday I changed a bunch of interior doorknobs around. We have an interesting arrangement of doorknobs, and I consulted with you to determine where to put them. We have four interior doors: one for the bathroom, one for the closet, and two for the bedrooms. The closet and bedrooms are all off the same hallway, therefore they can all be included in one eyeshot. We have purchased: one silver lever doorknob without a lock, one with a lock, and one darker-hued levered knob (which I bought on overstock.com, thinking it was two sets of knobs, as it was labeled). We prefer levered knobs in this house because they enhance the gallery aesthetic. You helped with the solution, which I am vaguely happy with. Locking lever on the closet. Silver non-locking on the bedroom, darker non-locking on the other bedroom (which is often in some shade), and locking standard knob from one of the bedrooms on the bathroom. Should we ever have guests the lock will come in handy. I'd like to get a locking lever sometime. You prone on the couch icing your knee.

I made some leftover lunch and it was fine.

What else happened yesterday? A lot of commerce. We went to the used appliance store. We debated many of our needs. We found the perfect refrigerator, a combo washing machine/dryer, and an amazing vintage kitchen stove. I'm ashamed how excited I am by these things. The men at the place were so nice, they fix them up themselves, showed us the special stock, and gave us great deals and water. We tried to speak a little Spanish with them. They will be delivered on Monday, because we have to wait for a part for the fridge.

We went looking at thrift stores in Joshua Tree and Yucca Valley for lamps. We got two pairs of boots for you, three records (Leonard Cohen, Genesis, Kinks), a set of bowls that you loved, and a splendid typewriter. Then we went (more shame) to Walmart—the museum of America—and suffered. You hobbled all around there. We bought a vacuum, some clothespins, I can't remember what else. Some knee braces. I was almost run over by an able-bodied man in a scooter with a chicken in his basket. I could go on about Walmart, but I hope never to have to. We swore we'd never come back.

We made it back, hammocked for awhile, had a handful of nuts. Watched the sun go down, and watched a little after, which is better. K picked up a limp along the way.

I learned how to make vegan macaroni and cheese. Quinoa shells and cashew cheese. When I set it in to bake in your new bowl, I did an impossible leg workout. I fell over a hundred times.

You were hungry and so was I and we ate our dinner. I also learned that if you soak limp lettuce in an icebath, it revives the crunch.

I learned a lot yesterday. I made a tiny fire in the chimenea. We puffed on the panda. Watched a Marlon Brando western on the laptop. *The Appaloosa*. You couldn't buy it. I was all in. It was super meta, and Brando is the weakest western hero you could find, until the end when you see he can overcome a scorpion sting and that he has a little talent for killing.

July 25, 2014

Yesterday I was going to write all about you.

You made the Bancha tea in the morning, then cacao-blueberry smoothies. You changed all the door knobs and made them levers and made the closet lock. You made rice and adzukis with a head of kale. You brought out the

flavor tray. You made us a chilled water with ice and lemon before driving into town, but then you left it in the fridge.

You drove us into town for appliances and a box store. You carried the gift cards from your sister two years ago on Festivus. You checked on the Buffalo Bills on your phone and tuned in to the NFL channel on the radio.

You showed me where the sporting goods were so I could find a knee brace while you looked for an onion in the impossible Andy Warhol shopping place. You noticed the obese couple in matching scooters.

You loaded the bowl and noticed how good I am at smoking. You made gluten-free vegan mac and cheese like it was not a thing. You queued up the Marlon Brando film, the Western where he tries a Mexican accent with blue eyes and a disgusting mop of blond hair, fake beard. You noticed the glue on the beard.

You played guitar lying on your back on the blue couch. You worked out hard.

We bought used appliances from Carlos. A Samsung fridge he was working on in the back, only showed us later. A washer-dryer that does it all, even thought we've had one before, it was Italian and broke and we couldn't afford the repair. For some reason we think this one will be better, it's an LG. A stove we only see on the way out, white frosted glass from the 80s. Carlos likes the old things like we do. He gives us bottles of water, is a gentleman from some other time. You're worried we won't be able to get all that money out of the credit union, but there it is.

We go to the Picking Shack and get a typewriter, Underwood. I get two pairs of boots, one calf tan with fringe mid-rise, another low-rise black suede with silver buttons. Dingo and Minnetonka. Cheap. I don't even really think about it, thrift store shoes, I don't even wonder if they'll be stinky, they look so new. Even the bottoms have no wear.

Right away you see a reel-to-reel you want, the guy says it comes with tapes, *Who knows it could be Kennedy and Marilyn*. You don't buy it. I find a set of four nesting Pyrex serving bowls for so little, burnt orange color with a white harvest print. We get a Leonard Cohen record, a Kinks one with everything, and the good Genesis.

We buy a vacuum at the box store. I remember all the vacuums we've had that don't work and how we could have afforded the good one by now.

Yesterday I really couldn't walk finally and went into public with my limp. I like limping, I know that's terrible. I like the way I am a problem, people can finally see my problems with a limp. But I'm probably wrong, people probably don't think Oh that poor girl with the limp, like I'm in fifth

grade or something. They probably think, *Woah that's a fucked up woman with a limp.*

Walking the entire width of the box store to where you pointed is the most difficult, I almost don't make it. I walk there to get a knee brace. I get two. I move so slowly I see everything.

The obese man in the scooter grabs a full chicken from the rotisserie first thing. I tell you about that later. How is he going to shop with that chicken in his cart, won't it spoil.

At home we try to walk barefoot on the sand to get grounded. I think you're barefoot so I go barefoot. I get burned and you have flippers on I see.

Kiki comes up limping in the evening. I think she's in sympathy with me. There's no thorn and no cut but she licks and licks her left front paw. We have some confusion about what is a dog's right and what is a dog's left when I try to tell you which one. I can't see what's wrong with the paw, there is no outward sign.

I fall asleep before the movie's over. I don't smoke enough. The typewriter looks supreme on the faux-denza you made. I read lots of Anne Waldman, I look at all the pictures. I'm glad someone is talking about these things.

I wonder what you write about in here.

07.26.2014

Yesterday had clouds from the beginning, even a little rain here and there, desert weirdness, stunning: sun over clouds and breezes. It kept the heat down below 100 and we kept the windows open all day. It was a peaceful day: never into town until evening, books and a few projects, lots of staring into the sun. I don't feel like I did anything. I slept a lot, hung in a hammock and stared at the horizon.

The days when you can't remember much might be the best days. We shouldn't have brought the phones inside. I checked them a few times. Nothing to see there. Nothing in the world.

We were in the world enjoying our place at Kickapoo trail. I exercised early, legs on fire, squats and crazy jumps from my dvds. I felt competent in my body, some strength growing there but shameful balance and flexibility. Soaked in sweat, looked at my scar in the mirror before showering.

You had a good day too. You wrote. You read. We tried to inhabit different rooms a bit, see if we can get some habits, sequester ourselves in our own

creative spaces. I wrote a bit of a poem in bed, no idea how to do it, something with Wittgensteinian logic and Beckett ambivalence, but my own pathetic version. I cannot understand how a poem can be good, how it can consider an audience, no wonder it comes down to accessibility, personality, coterie, and Facebook campaigns.

Smoothie for breakfast, you cooked some deliciousness from scraps we had lying around in the fridge for lunch. We were going to Pappy's for dinner later, so we ate light. I forgot, when I woke up I made my first batch of cashew milk. Here's a recipe: soak one cup of cashews in water overnight. In the morning, rinse the cashews and place them in the blender with three cups of water, part of a date, and maybe some vanilla. Blend 'til milk. I filtered mine with a fine strainer, but they have nut milk bags too. I shall try this with hemp seeds soon.

The dogs had a good day. We had one too. I'm sure I'm leaving so much out, yes I am, the way I took down a desk anchored to the wall to go with the chair I cannot get casters on, how I don't have any wall anchors and will have to get them today. What a change it makes having my clothes in another room, how much neater it is to have yours in our bedroom. How we vacuumed with our new vacuum, not for cleanliness, but to see if it would work.

Dinnertime we went to Pappy and Harriet's Pioneertown Palace for dinner and entertainment. Dinner was good, we shared an organic half chicken. I have my issues about this, being vegan every other way, except for occasional eggs, but it is more about filling in missing nutrition than ethics at this point. And this chicken was healthy before we ate it and it was raised nearby. I had my seldom-applied glass of red wine. I thought about the antioxidants, the B-12 this dinner offered. The kale salad was different tonight, there was baby kale in there.

I would like to describe Pappy's to the uninitiated reader, but sometime later. The band was terrible in the most memorable way. That dance the singer did. I bet you covered that. We left fairly early.

Panda and stars and a great conversation about Brando versus Newman, about being a savior at twenty-five. How could one recover from that? Start a somewhat ethical food company. Learn to act. We watched *Jeremiah Johnson* and it was okay, but not the movie I thought it was going to be, which is what I go to the movies for.

July 26, 2014

Yesterday I tried to remember little things for today. I watched an animal for a long time to see if it hopped.

Yesterday it rained in the desert. Sideways rain through the screens. All the smells changed and molted.

You stayed in the hammock a long time in the wind. I hobbled over but went back inside. You climbed the stairs I couldn't climb to the roof with the dogs.

I learned Spanish. *Amarillo* and *blanco*, *comer* and *correr*. I am a child inside any language.

I made brown rice mixed with wild rice and yams. We ate outside facing the back after the rain. You wiped off the table which had brown dots. Either dirty rain or dirty table.

I read too much Anne Waldman. A little David Byrne, a little Wittgenstein. Fourteen things from Thích Nhất Hạnh. Where is Vietnamese Buddhism in Anne Waldman. She goes to Nicaragua, she goes to India, she goes to 'Nam. It sounds like maybe she smokes an opium pipe and fucks young girls there. But I can't prove it in language.

David Byrne is a thief. But, he says, he thinks that's okay. Now I remember why I stopped reading that book.

I look forward to Pappy's all day. We see some brother band from "the midwest." Where is the Midwest, bring it to me. On second thought, keep it.

We laugh at the ridiculous dance moves the singer has. Side to side heel slide in women's Levi's jeans. I say women don't wear women's Levi's jeans. All of his songs are about women, not like the Kinks. He wears his long light brown hair in a loose gel curl. I'd like to see the look on David Byrne's face.

We almost argue when you don't notice the misogynist lyrics. Then you do. *I like the way men look at you, I like it when they get you in the back seat of their car.* He is the only one with a wedding ring, I notice. I say how can she abide, you say there's no accounting for taste.

We laugh when I sing, You Say Yes, I say No, operatic, sort of to myself. Maybe I'm trying to be funny and maybe I'm just singing a little Beatles tune. Maybe I wasn't thinking about it, which makes me laugh harder, wipe tears into my face cream.

We sit out back in the way back chairs and look up. I see one star move inexplicably and a cloud of white dust spread out. You say aliens are rocks. I believe it too.