

Rock Creek Bay, Utah

The wind whispers eerie nothings around the frame and fabric of my backpack, where it stands up over my shoulders. I wish I had more water. I would not be able to carry it.

Unimagined grooves in the walls of the canyon at my feet surprise me. They speak intimately of water, and I do not believe there is water in all the world, except the lake-once-the-river, and what is in my canteen. The varied grain of the sandstone's layers testifies that the wind has always blown here.

It is a canyon inside a canyon. Around me a vast circle, miles in diameter, with stone walls a thousand feet high. To the south it opens on the lake. At its center, at my feet, a miniature of itself, still large enough to swallow me.

On those distant, surrounding walls, there are flat sections of sandstone hundreds of feet in both dimensions, painted with the stripes of water's ephemeral but repeated touch. I stand on sandstone, and every inch is grooved or splotched or fissured. What the wind once deposited, is slowly removed.

There is so much information recorded here. Perhaps it is a record of everything that has ever happened in these canyons. The first flight of a Wren, painted 300 feet high. Each fissure in the stone I stand on marks one day the sun unnoticingly pounded the earth in nuclear ecstasy.

No. There is no pattern my mind can impose. It is the story of wind, water and stone in a literal language that causes me to dream of battering hills into sand with my body, of leaping over the precipice in my need to reach the sea, of enduring for the sake of enduring. Some part of me stirs. Something essential, at my core, inhumane and old. Reborn in me it is big, big by its connection to stone, wind and water. It stretches, brushing the cage of my ribs. These dreams call it, and it lunges to that call, but cannot squeeze through the pinhole of my understanding.

The wind blows a puff of sand in my face, a caress. It sings its song of furious communion, and of forgetting oneself the way stone forgets itself, one grain at a time.

Josh Gentry
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