Justifying My Social Life

Without whom this piece would have been finished two years earlier

Thanks

For that

They say a writer goes out into the world

More so than any other profession

Except maybe an ornithologist or something

But is there a divine ratio

Between writing and living?

I’d like to know

I think I tend to live too much

But I digress

To write, we must experience

What would we be if not for experiences?

The old adage says: “write what you know”

How could we write what we know if we simply don’t know?

So thanks

For your knowing

And your generosity of it

For lending me your spectacles so I can see just how blind you really are

So we could share a laugh about it together

For letting my feet sink into your stinky-sweaty shoes

Two sizes too big
For allowing me to put on layers and layers of your dirty laundry until I overheat and fall asleep
And thanks for bringing me a cup of water after
In a glass you didn’t polish
Salinger was one such writer
Who had enough of the rest of us
We see our isolation as proportional to greatness, after all
It feels like a prerequisite—a necessary sacrifice
One we take for granted
But what is a great story without a great life to fuel it?
We have too much of an obsession with great minds
Isn’t it absurd to think that we write stories ourselves?
We see ourselves as characters
What use are characters without the dynamics between them?
That’s the fat between the dry, lean beef
Juicy
Yum
That’s what makes stories worth reading
Unless you’re Kafka, I guess

Aphelion
It’s quiet as I drift
Though my head screams—the oasis
Around me is complete empty
But something cushions me, cradling me as I float

The cold somehow

Warms me

Face away from home

Towards beyond

One part of everything else

It’s been fifteen minutes

It will hit

Any moment

Atop my helmet is a knit hat I bought in Amsterdam

That should tell you everything

I’m no astronaut

They made an exception for me

My vision isn’t perfect

But they know

I see in a different way

And they need me

My stomach feels pulled apart

My feet stretch away from my head

Now I’m floating in more than one way

It’s starting

A hero’s dose

Funny, that’s what NASA called me
Oh God
It’s hit
Mbowe and Singh stare at their hands
Babies with umbilical cords
American flags on their shoulders
Seeing the real world for the first time
They’re right there with me
The stars zoom towards and past me
Points stretching into lines
Drawing in space
They twist and contort
Their aura is water dipped with paint
Faint at first, but now vibrant
That’s lemon tech for you
Space: an impressionistic masterpiece
I begin a chant that’s traveled a long way from Ecuador
My eyes close, but I still see
My breath slows to the rhythm of space
The brushstrokes pulse
And with them, a silent universe speaks
It’s not English, but my eyes shoot open, streaming tears
Of course I understand
But they wouldn’t
I’ll tell them the mission was a bust

The Good Old Days

It won’t be much longer
Before the city that never sleeps finally slumbers beneath a bed of waves
Before the howler monkey and the harpy eagle and the jaguar compete as panhandlers
Before we remember the first pandemic as “the good old days”
I can try and stop it if I choose
I can put aside my passions and hobbies and squat down instead
To try and lift the impossible boulder
The world
A feat that exhausts even the titans
And perhaps a few others would join me
We’d strain together, grind our teeth together, tear our muscles together
If I knew that I’d only live till thirty
That the package I unwillingly subscribed to gave me less than it did my predecessors
Would it be selfish of me to carry on as I wish?
Would it be selfish of me to stand in the middle of a dirty kitchen and decide to only clean the
dishes I was responsible for?
To wash my hands afterwards and saunter out whistling?
If I am no titan, how much of the world am I responsible for?
Surely just the part of it that I can lift
So why do I feel so damn guilty?
Why don’t I tear away from passion? From hobbies?

Dissolve away whatever I have left through sheer strain

Give all of myself and whatever I can possibly be

All before I turn thirty