

## 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