

IN LIGHT OF A LOSS A WORLD IS CREATED

*The Narrator stoops, wrapped in a jacket,
and presses against a current of streaming light;
the pages of her notebook detach and fly midair.
During a sudden calm, she halts and remembers.
Then, disoriented, she floods. Within ten beats,
stillness is depicted with an atmosphere of blue.
Feverish, she drops to the ground and draws a map.*

[Insert the Narrator's map of
the River-That-Formerly-Was
here.]

NARRATOR

To the Audience.

Along the River-That-Formerly-Was
are maps of the solar system
to show the distance between planets
by foot. Next to Uranus
is the wastewater treatment facility.

And what is inside is always
reflected outside— isn't it?

*The Narrator slumps asleep
and dreams*

*of a body transposed onto an undulating page.
Text spreads beyond the boundaries of the page
body*

*itself, seeping. As she sleeps, the Technician apparatus
and adds his amendments: A dam. A wet well. A manhole. A
canal. A vast irrigation system. A leaky faucet.*

*His pen scratching translates inside her dream
as the buzzing of a tattoo gun. Meanwhile, her mind
shuffles memories, which twist, refract, and double—
animated outside of herself.*

[Insert Technician's map with amendments here.]

When the dreams subside they etch an imprint on the earth.

The imprint of a body that has vanished. The imprint of the waters' rise etched in the floodplain, once it recedes.

The last departing drop of water becomes Gutterslut, and then

a stream of

tears that cry her into being—

that cry her

from the map and into

the first act.

ACT 1

THE FISHERMAN

The Fisherman crouches beside a river in the post-collapse world of grief. The manta ray mumbles and the willow tree weeps. The young couple in the dusty clump of grass slowly approaches first base. The Fisherman baits the hook and a cloud drifts past the sun. The surface of the River-That-Formerly-Was darkens. This is a river of grief. Grief like fish rot, heavy with sludge. After a rain, the sludge dilutes, awash on the surface with residue: sticky plastic bags, old tires, an empty sealed wine bottle full of doodled dicks on shriveled bits of paper.

He crushes cans, belches, notices the little things: infinitesimal ripples from a distant cargo boat before the freight finally passes and the high notes conjured by each glint of light.

The Fisherman casts out so his burden plunks below the surface of the water. The line drops and, like a nerve, travels up, until he feels a stirring in his chest.

FISHERMAN

Casts his line.

GUTTERSLOT

Paces the shore.

Anything?

FISHERMAN

Turns. Grunts.

Nothin' to eat.

GUTTERSLOT

Long pause.

I was planning on swimming
in the river.

FISHERMAN

Laughs. Spits.

Not in this river ya aren't.

Gutterslut and Fisherman look to the current.

*Gutterslut picks up a stone and squats to skip it.
She flicks her wrist and lets the stone spin, flying.*

GUTTERSLOT

I'm here because of a phone call.

Lights dim.

*Instantaneously, the river drains around a corner,
not to leave, but to wait.*

RIDING CALLS THE NARRATOR

In the center of a junked-up shoreline, a kitchen is conjured as a life-size diorama, a tableau:

Raspberry wallpaper, a round wooden table with a bouquet of tulips, a bowl of five ripe plums, a small marble counter with a sink, and a house phone mounted on the wall next to hanging pots and pans.

The Narrator enters, busy, and when a phone calls she sits at the table. Gutterslut hovers outside on the surrounding shore. Riding's voice enters from above, omnipresent.

NARRATOR

Picks up the phone.

Hello?

GUTTERSLOT

Picks up the phone.

Hello?

Static cuts in and out of dialogue, obscuring.

RIDING

As audio.

Hello.

Static.

I hope you've been well.

Static.

I'm calling about Noah.

GUTTERS LUT

My fault. My fault.

What has been done that—

NARRATOR

Noah was my partner.

Noah was

Noah is my

No—

Movement of backspace.

Riding is on the other line—

his mom.

RIDING

Apparently he—

Static.

at night. He hasn't shown up—

GUTTERSLUT

Can't be amended.

NARRATOR

To the Audience.

At the point she called he had only been
missing for a few days. We—No—

Movement of backspace.

Noah—No. He's—

RIDING

—and no one has heard from him for a
few days now...

Static.

NARRATOR

To Riding.

I heard from Noah a few days prior.

I called him every day until—

He responded, *alright... getting by...*

I knew he wasn't. For a long time, I—

For a long time I—

I should have told you.

NARRATOR

To Riding.

I'll try calling others. Let me know
if you hear anything.

GUTTERSLUT

I turned away.

I called him, but—

I knew he wasn't. I knew he wasn't alright.

—someone.

I should have told someone.

It's my fault. I should have—

GUTTERSLUT

Do you see the afterglow?

*The Narrator hangs up the phone. As a paper bird, the room
folds into itself and migrates.*