

## Deserts, Valleys, and Mountains

“I never thought about my empties until recently.”

“You mentioned to me an autobiography exercise months ago. I rarely thought about my life or other’s. My attention is always elsewhere, so bright and flashy. Sometimes there would be cues, out of the blue, and I would remember and think but I never wandered too far off, never near my empties. Too many empty deserts. Too many empty valleys and mountains. Too many empty people. I get anxious and turn back around to the safety of the blue and green.”

“I eventually got around and followed your instructions vague as they were. I cut the 3 by 5 index cards in half. I numbered the cards with the years and my age, chronological and continuous like. Between two brimming oceans, I even colored a river from one card to another. Casually, I began to remember my life and wrote or drew cues on the front and back of the flashcards. 1993 I was on the Island and wished I did more, went outside more, hiked and fished. 28 years old, an accident and a change for the better. 35 years old both a joyous and depressing time. Then, of course, there was Fall, 2018!”

“Winter.”

“After a while, I lost interest to be honest, my past and future are so faint and empty, boring, much like my recursive thoughts, sentences and math, so unlike the present, so green and blue. My memories and thoughts are not continuous and real like right now. Only flashes and my empties. Dim. Hazy. I’ve already forgotten so much. I don’t know how or why, not enough attention, not enough study. My fault I guess. So much rushing around, always in a hurry, chasing priorities, so bright and sparkling, so depraved and sad. I’m afraid I realized too late. So much is already lost and missing I’m afraid.”

“So many roads, so many homes.”

“So many people! Where they come from and go I don’t even know. I don’t know their names or hometowns. I’m noticing them more and more, careful not to stare.”

“See, hear, think. So much more is going on if you would only notice more. Study more.”

“How many more roads? How many more doors? How many more people?”

“How much more? So much is already lost and missing.”

“A couple of weeks ago I got inspired again after dreaming of Sandy. I stopped concentrating on the years and my age. My \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. . . Stopped worrying so much about my \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. . . They’ve all have become silly and unimportant. Instead of the chronological design with a river with some rapids but mostly lulls, I got the idea to think differently about my life, my empties.”

“No more words or numbers, no more math or sentences? No more pictures or sketches?”

I shuffle and scramble the sparks.”

“Sparks? Oh really! Or are they all embers and ash?”

“I flip them over, shuffle, turn them over and over, scramble them some more, shuffle and shuffle and shuffle, and then cut, randomly choose one to think about, think about all my empties.”

“The present is so blue and green, so safe and reassuring.”

“So much is going on! Noticing so much. Too much!”

“What will you do when the blue and green disappears and you’re all alone? No more doors. No more people. Only you

and your empties. No more crossing deserts and deserts, through the valleys and over mountains. Again, and over again?”

“So beautiful the blue and green. Clouds and clouds.”

“I can’t help myself but I know. There’s not that much around the blue and green that really pertains to me anymore. So old now, long past me by, only sands and ruins. Little comfort, no help. What do I do, go over to right now, green and blue, and pull out \_\_\_\_\_ and manufacture and build on my empties? I’m very careful now after Sandy’s last visit. I’m more cautious about replacing my empties with the present. They soon crumble. I think I know why and yet here I am again and I can’t help myself, only for a little while more. Please.”

“What’s so wrong with my empties after all, what’s so wrong with wandering around my empties? Thinking. Trying.”

“You talk and talk about your empties. What’s so special about your empties because you can’t remember, can’t think. Crossing through desert after deserts, valleys, from one mountain to another? Is it like a missing number in one of the many infinite series? Sequences? A missing word in a sentence, a missing sentence in a paragraph? A missing paragraph in a story? Nothing changes. Ladders, cloud

climbing, pulling weeds, crossing out all the impossible possibilities. If you don't recall, only rungs and steps or like picking out the grains from a hand full of white sands. All that is left is left. All that remains, remains. Not so special. Not so special after all, your wacky empties."

"Perhaps, nothing serious, my empties, nothing really special, really simple. Sleeping walking. Running jumping. Knocking and knocking."

"A lot is missed, never noticed. You ever notice yourself?"

"Slow down. Stop! Don't remind me!"

The present is so alive and safe. Feels so continuous like a colorful river, complete and together. Feels like rain. Snow. Incredible, too good to be true! Not like my empties and lightning flashes."

"The precious blue and green, always present, always friendly."

"With white cumulus clouds, appearing and disappearing, and reappearing. Soft. Distant. So kind."

"So much is going on. I never want to leave!"

“Please slow down!”

“So many homes. So many doors.”

“So many roads.”

“So many people!”

“So unlike some of my dreams lately.”

“Go ahead and tell them about your dreams!”

“I told you and Sandy about my dreams haven’t I? I’m scared. My empties, my being. Confusing. Several times I have run out of my dreams. Or turned a corner and the Blackest of Blacks. Black is not a good word. No color, really. Colorless. Only my thoughts, stupid words and sentences, numbers and math. Counting, combining, rearranging no flashes, no embers. No sound, no light, no one else around. Empty, my empties. Wandering around lost. Trying. I wake up, how I don’t know, twice into another dream, most of the time right here, right now.”

“How did you get here back here, do you remember?”

“Somehow. I don’t remember how! I must of turned back before \_\_\_\_\_. I stopped trying.”

“Scary, crazy.”

“You don’t want to return!”

“Look! Listen! Think! Running out. Close, closer. No more going around the brimming green and blue. How much more, really? Under every rock and stone, over and over again. Knocking and knocking. Nowhere left to go, you’re so, so old now. So empty. You going to randomly wander around the blue and green some more until you can’t anymore? Clinging on for dear life. Not much left.”

“So many wild guesses.”

“Why don’t you take a break away from the green and blue more often. Why won’t you wander around your empties? Afraid of quitting and never leaving again? Afraid of finding . . . or not find . . .”

“Damn you, pull over. Please slow down and stop. Let me breathe. Let me think.”

“Remember dear o’ Sandy. Remember when she would visit.”

“All was well and good. So much fun.”

“Her empties.”

“Sandy. Lovely o’ Sandy. I miss her.”

“Right now, the green and blue. So beautiful. Eternal. So many clouds. So many roads. So many doors. So many good people!”

“You can’t help yourself can you! For a little while more.”

“I never want to leave, keep crossing over desert after deserts, going by valleys, up and up mountain after mountains, again and again, and all over again.”

“So much, too much. Careless and almost free, opening the windows, cool breezes, starting to sprinkle. I can almost touch the clouds.”



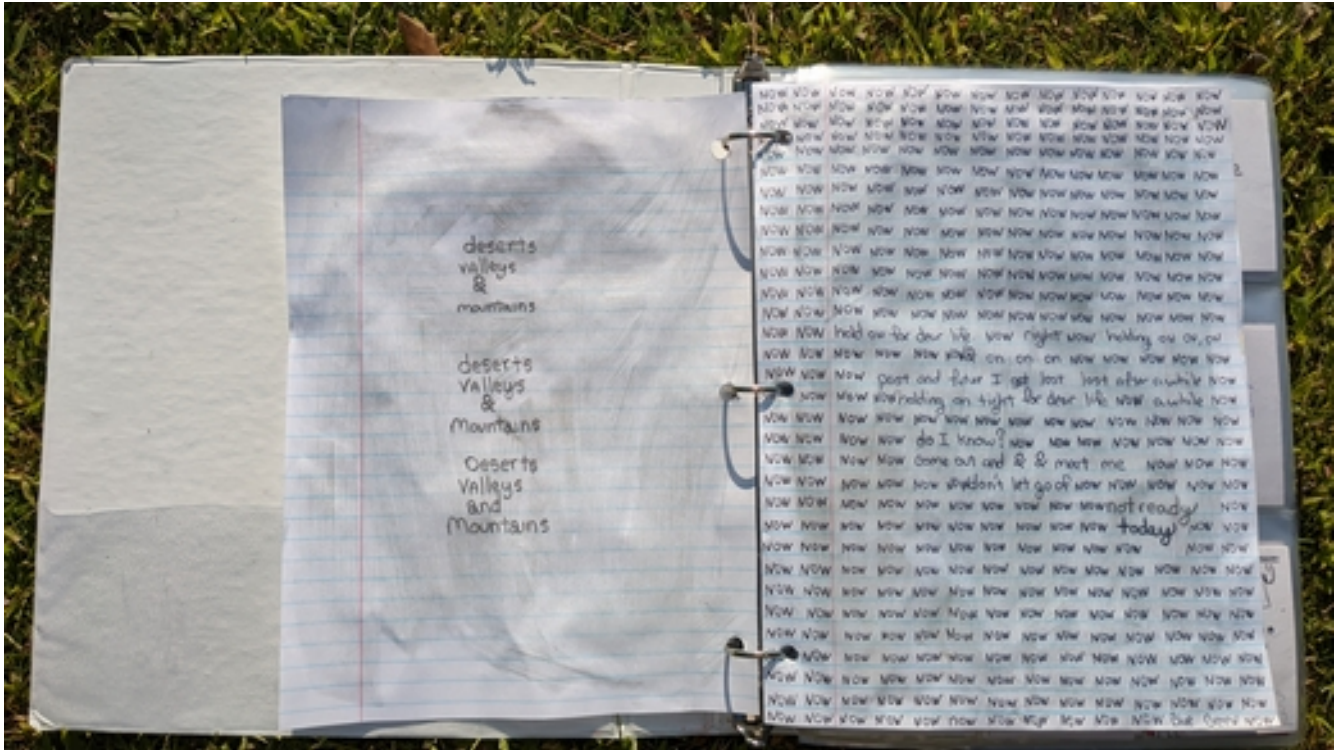
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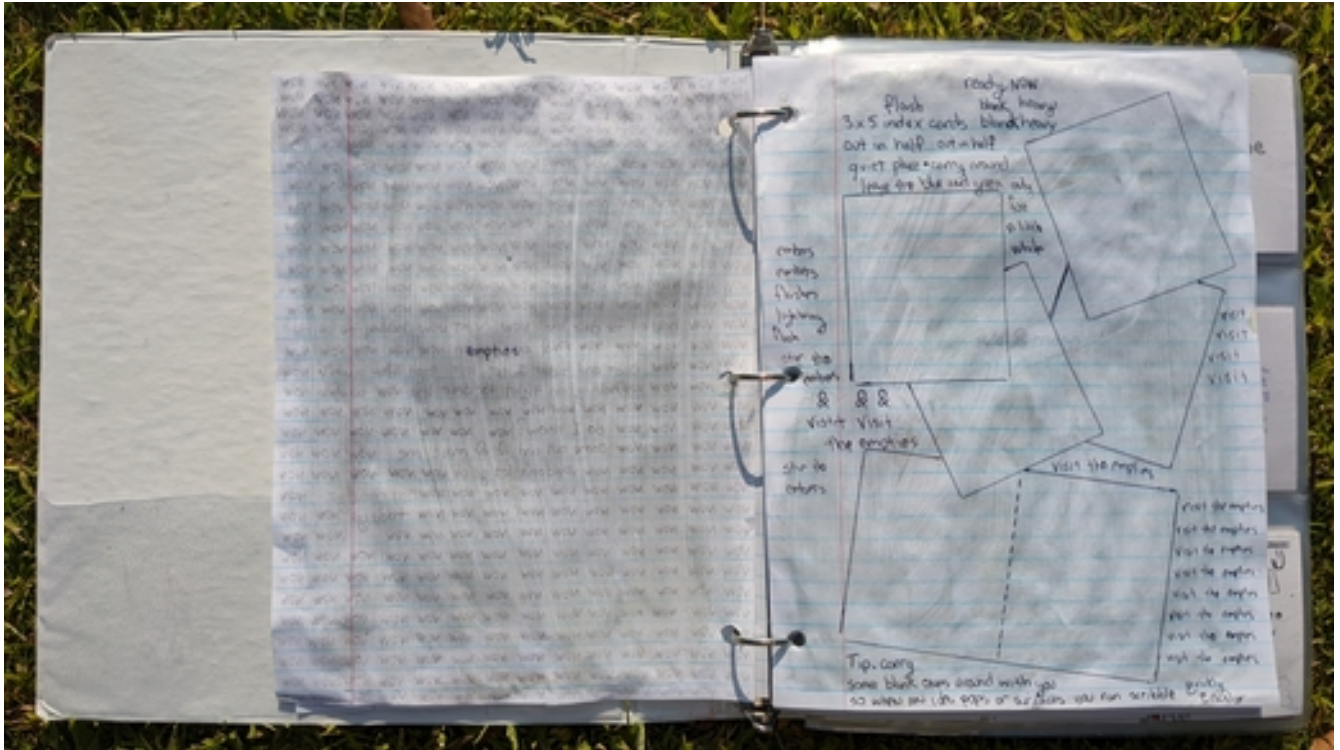
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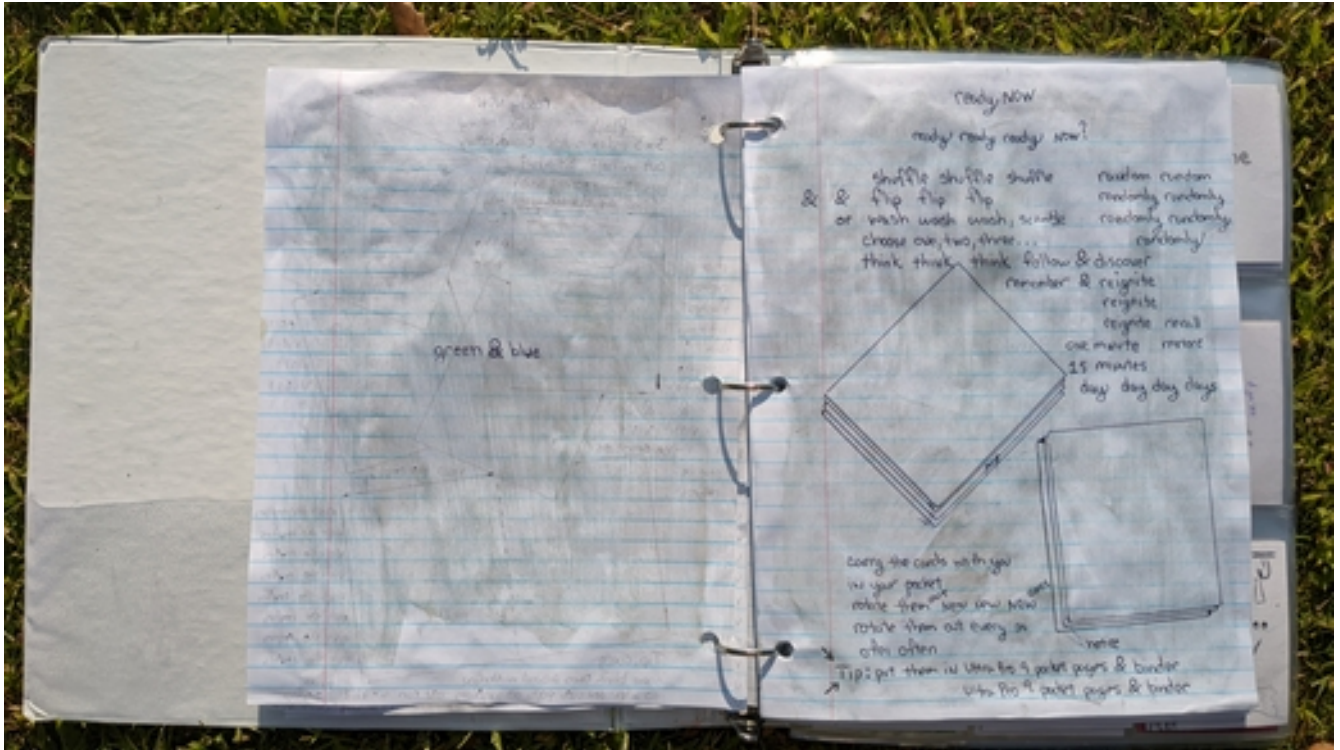
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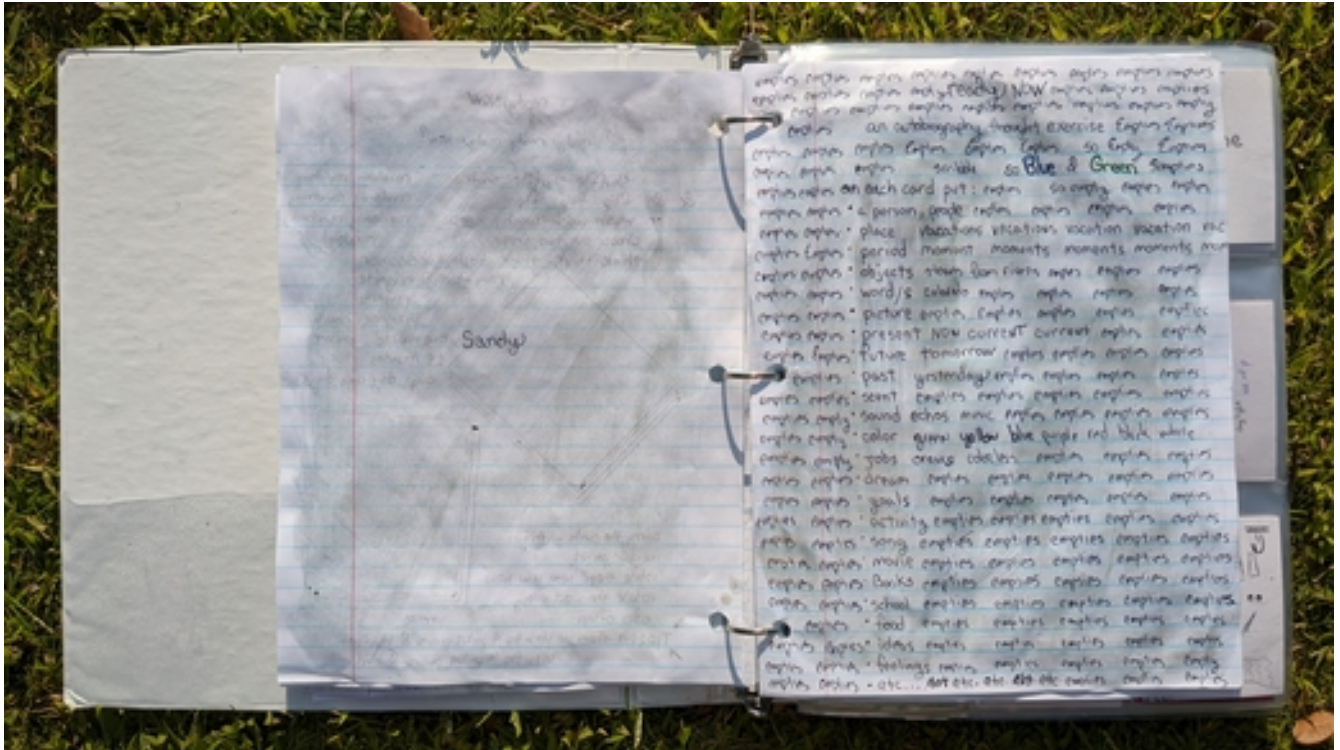
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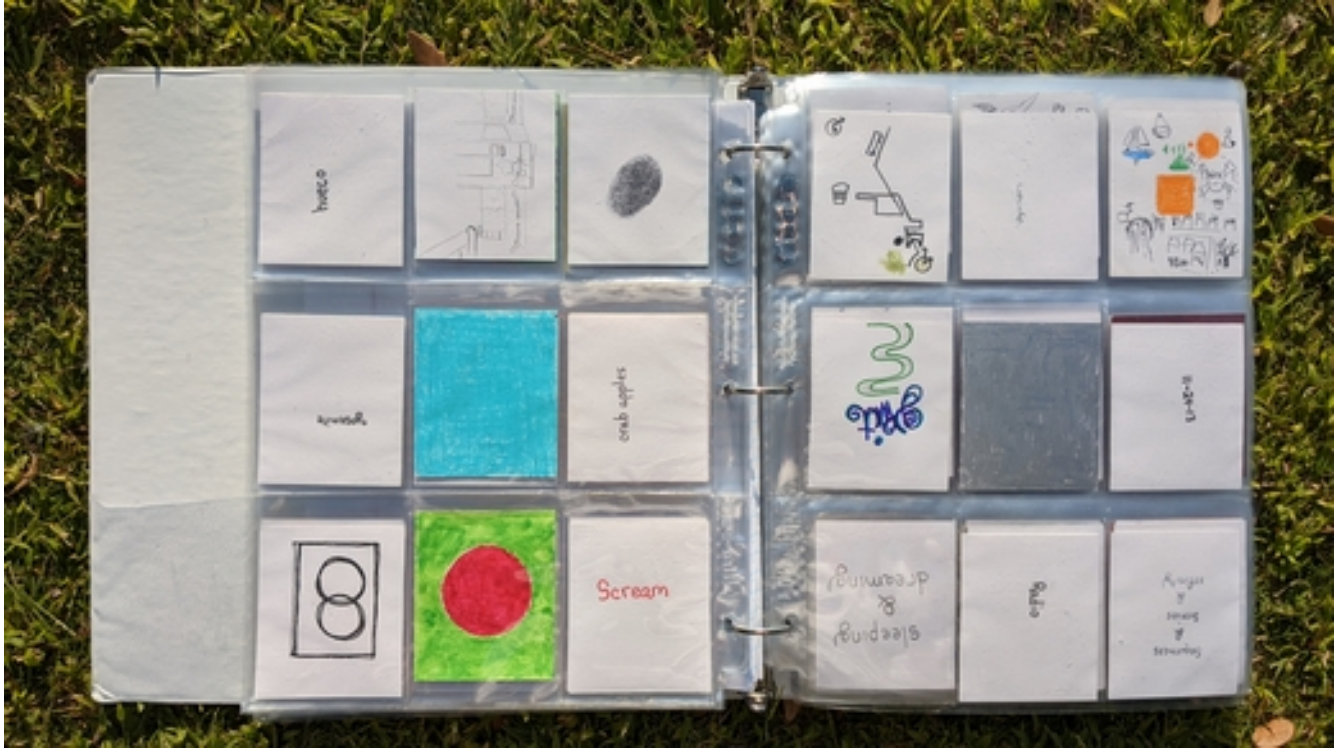
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