*In 2013 my town was practically destroyed by a disastrous flood. All the infrastructure — bridges, electricity, fire station, water plant— the canyon road, and a fifth of our homes were swept away down the river. Our sweet creek was the size of the Colorado River for 3 days. Most every resident evacuated by army helicopters. It took over a year to rebuild the road, begin the slow recovery of infrastructure, but true recovery will take much longer. I was one witness to this disaster, and  here is my edited chronical.*

Flood Journal

Monday night

Sept. 9, 2013
This is how it starts—
I’m scribbling beneath the freshened dome, in bed with my healing hip bolstered just right, suspended in between the rain drenched earth and the mist that ladders the ground to the sky surrounds us. Suddenly it's not summer. Sodden and silvered and the roar of that creek down there insisting with the disgruntled crows on water, water., more water.  Every pine needle drips down from spongy bark.

Tuesday night
Black night of silver knives, invisible, pounding my little wooden boat of a bedroom, my delicious mattress, this steep steel roof.  It’s the fourth day of pounding rain, pure hard-heartless rain. Rain as karma. Rain as justice. Scimitar rain. Shiv rain. Biblical. Deadly. But, nature opens wider to receive. And the forest goes down on her knees…..

Wednesday night
Coming home late, too late, after therapy, after meeting Saira and Sabino, who i haven’t seen since my hip replacement, 6 weeks before—but already it’s too late.  The sirens went off in Boulder just before midnight to warn all homeless folk away from the creek. The sirens blast as we’re smoking hash outside the cupcake shop on Broadway, and I start to say my startled goodbyes. Outside, the relentless storm is filled with blades, the dancing dervish night spins like Kali swinging Durga, whirling red and black till nothing can stand.
In my mind, I see the fist sized stones littering the muddy canyon road, the flood that’s coming, every drop a wave, a winged hammer. Every curb in town’s a moat, calf deep when I step off to find my car—I can’t stay here. It’s already too late.

Sloshing water, I find my car. It’s impossible just crossing the street. Siren are loosed upon the land and I drive my sweet little cupcake car, silver Honda civic sedan, towards home, 13 miles away. *Too late, too late* shouts the wind and I crawl north and west, windshield wipers on frantic fly. First i try the highway—36— but as i turn west onto the canyon road, the water is too deep for passage. I turn round and head back towards town and try Old Stage Road. As I start my struggle so slowly up, up, up, there are  stones of all sizes and mud crowd the asphalt. I try to miss the rocks, every gully a wash, every driveway a flood. I think I’ll stop at a friend’s, but when I get there I see the yellow police tape, the flashing lights. I drive on. A sodden snake of road, diverted and diverted again. No one else is out here. No headlights to follow up. In way more danger than I realize, I submit, I surrender. Alright, you wild spirits of storm—take me. I’ll hold onto this wheel. Work the pedals gently. Feel it.

This is Chicken Little Canyon and the sky has fallen, and I’m too late. My hip hurts like hell from overdoing it all day long. I dry-swallow a Vicodin, cracking the slammed-shut curtain of pain a little, and blurring everything nicely to an easier tilt, a slit of road in a world of rock, an calmer roaring fills my head.  Another hour passes, impossibly— braking hard for rock slides, pushing this poor car so slowly through a riverbed of washout, when a State Trooper suddenly roars past me on lower Left Hand Canyon, and I’m really psyched to finally have tail-lights to follow. But this cruiser’s  moving way too fast for me to keep up. After 3 or 4 curves, the trooper hits his brakes hard, and spins around roughly till he’s facing me. I brake hard. Stop. In front of the trooper’s swung-around car is a rockslide that’s covered the road. Completely. I try to roll down my window, but the rain is slashing inside. So, I pull up my hood and get out, head bent and walk over, soaked and leaning into the roar of wind. He opens his window a crack. I shout, “I live in Jamestown. I need to get home.” He tells me to go back down to Boulder, drive to Lyons and up 7. No fucking way I’m going 40 miles, down again and up another canyon road. There are better options, I’m sure. I think. I can’t think.

I drive back down for 3 miles. Slowly slowly. My wipers blazing in front of my exhausted eyeballs. Back down Left Hand to Old Stage and then west up Lee Hill. This road too is filled with rocks and running water. I crawl over every crazy obstacle and at last I make it back to the left turn to Jamestown, just one curve past the mountain-slide and the Trooper’s tracks.

I arrive home at 2 a.m., minutes after the mountain fell, killing Joey. I arrive home. So single-minded, so ignorant of anything but arriving home as the road collapses behind my tires. Stoned and exhausted, I fall into bed, and just vibrate there for hours.

Thursday
Rain grows a beard, becomes the wrathful Old Testament god. Limitation opens his red and black maw and swallows us all over again.  Outside, there is just Flood. Infamous, the Hundred Year Flood, which is really the 500 Year Flood, and some will say the millennial flood. Holy holy, and holy shit! Water fills the known and knowing world.

Joy and I walk down to Lynn's where we face the roaring brown waters taking 12th street away forever, and we hear that Joey is dead. We ford the rage of road to watch from some half sunken backyard the Stoke's house underwater, and 2 propane tanks in the road that is now river, the river that has become *It All*, and the propane tanks are dancing in trippy slow circles and hissing from their punctures, and the smell of propane settles in over Jamestown. Some houses, we don't know the numbers yet, have been totally destroyed, gone down with the flood to Longmont. We hike up to Mesa Street, crossing the flooding on 12th by some super scary boards of hippie bridge. Many folks are at the school. People bring food, emptying their fridges and freezers to share with all. We stand with a dozen neighbors on Rutiger's big porch and watch roofs, walls, hot tubs, decks, and more propane tanks sail swiftly past. There's styrofoam everywhere. Nancy's guitar case flows by to our silence and awe.

Now, we’re an official Disaster, recognized by the government—FEMA, The Red Cross, and helicopters are coming to take away the sick and old and the babies. Ward Street is buried under the river and every bridge is gone. The town is completely halved—there are people on the west side of the flood, and others on the east. The EMT’s and volunteer fire department folk have radios, and so can communicate between the two sides, and we hear there’s a zip line rigged, but I can’t walk far enough yet to see it. There are two meetings a day planned at the small elementary schoolhouse.We have to cross the scary planks again. And again. The rain beating on the houses has broken in.

Friday the 13th.  Yom Kippur
I wonder from my dry warm safe hot tea morning high bird perch about my friends and neighbors. What will last? What's already run out? And how about this vast mass of our human mess torn and shoved, shook free and gone down the river? The styrofoam  dances against the ruined bridge's piers. Materials pile up and the river turns, taking out another house. with every obstacle in it’s way, the river shifts, fluid as only water can be. The sky clears a bit for an hour till the cloud dragon rushes back up from the east in her silver veils, soft as my mother's hands to soothe us all
Next morning, I go down to the sight and sound of a half dozen military helicopters landing, synched as a parade procession, loading refugees and slashing away.  Many friends have left. Our mayor, the board and the fire department want everybody to go. But it's home, it's here, it's so gorgeous, and staying seems so important to do. I was gone for a month already this summer with the bummer surgery. Just got back. Our existence is *here*. The dogs and cars and 80 houseplants are  here. And my straw bale house, Yashi—perfectly placed to last, here on this mountain, far above the flood. And we have off-grid solar power, a working DC fridge, so much food, beer and weed, we’ve never had running water here, but there’s lots of propane to boil rain water and we can last here for a long time, except when we run out of propane, there's no way the truck can get here. Except there’s no way to haul drinking water from the contaminated spring. Except there’s no way out if there's an emergency and we need to get medical help or if there's a fire.  There's one firetruck on our side of the island that has 300 gallons of water, which they say will last 2 minutes, and when that's gone, there's no more water in all of Jamestown's system.

A rescuing army descends on Jamestown with attack helicopters and desert storm fatigues in daylight.  Loud and terrible panic for hours. The anxiety is heavy, the only thing unshredded by the rotary hell blades. Or maybe it's like the Allies marching into Poland, and I should feel joyous and liberated. I do not.

Still Friday 13th, Maelstrom
It’s coming on dark. The flood’s roar wraps vivid ribbons of sound all round us.When the last helicopter of the day leaves, we stay behind with the unevacuated, who are fewer and fewer. I find myself weightless with anxiety and rolling in the wind with a hundred small plastic FEMA water bottles, military rations, and all the trash. I’ve walked with my cane down here to pray at the river. *It is all River.*

Standing at the edge of the big park where we have all obediently followed the signs and stayed off the re-seeded grass for a year, I find myself calling the directions and sobbing softly. East-Air, South-Fire, but when I  face the West, the Water...the waters I can’t  get past praising the waters. Look at them! HO, i chant. Ho to the power of Water who, without our mess could just flow so magnificently—sculpting new canyons, ending a chapter, moving into the freefalling future without disaster. Ho to the necessity of flooding, to the minerals delivered onto the land for eons this way. Ho to the exuberance, the agility, the pure celebration and absolute innocence, the magnificent  enthusiasm, the fucking POWER of every drop.

As the shattered air knits back together, remembering patterns of rotary helicopter blades, quieting slowly, finally, it is so still. So strange the irony of stillness now, boiling as we are at the bottom of a trough of disaster and despondency, but *it is still*...so beautifully still...all but that chocolate brown flood surrounding me—there, there, there, laughing sweetly. Joey is dead, many of my friends and neighbors have lost everything, and the irony of a blissfilled awe I feel at the potency of this river bounces softly on the scales of my trembling heart.

Rubble everywhere that used to be the road, chaos everywhere that used to be our lives. Brown waterfalls splashing everywhere, carrying away what used to be our houses. Detritus spreads like a bloody stain in water, as roofs and porches, propane tanks and hot tubs  and furniture all stack up making higher, louder, crashing waterfalls, and the chaos of Nature’s reply so pretty,  calming the crazy chaos of this that's inside us all now. Or is that just me? Another meeting we hear, at 6, to check in with the commUnity.

Feeling like every refugee, every sobbing, bundle-laden, hungry,  sleepless, terrified, unwanted, displaced human that ever was. The dusty, frozen, soaking, huddled masses, the line of human mammals that stretches, trying to huddle, back to the beginning. This is what i feel now. And stubbornness, inching slowly through every bone in this body.
I DON'T WANT TO GO! NO!  NO! I don’t wanna leave my perfect life....maybe I haven't been grateful enough. Maybe this is all a dream. Maybe I can make deals with gods....just this bedroom! This round window view to the cosmos! Just these mountains! My luck has run out like a road, a landslide of luckless random fucking chaos landing smack like a great piano on my Rocky Mountain gold fortune.

Hey, fool! (Hisses the rare voice of reason) There’s no war here (despite the choppers descending and rising), no famine.  Just a little water and debris. We’ll be right back. What is flow? How to let the flood feed you? My imaginary therapist stands behind me, asking questions. *Flow* is a word we use to describe the feel of life.  *Flow*. I feel it.

We go to the meeting.  Down over the planks to cross the deluge of 12th street, up Mesa St. to the school. It’s hard for me to walk this far, and I’ve done it twice a day. I ache all the time.  At the meeting we learn that there’s no way down and no way up. Options up or down Boulder Canyon are gone. Hwy. 7 is gone. Left Hand Canyon, gone. So even if we *could* get out of this canyon in a vehicle, there is no way up or down to Boulder. And there’s no infrastructure here. And The National Guard’s not gonna wait for us past tomorrow at 8am, the last helicopter outta here. The town has no water, no electricity no phone, no internet. *Nobody will send you support here. There's no good we can do up here*, says the mayor, *but down there, we can lobby for our recovery.* Yeah. I’m not moved from my stubborn and limping position.

Get ready to leave they say. Turn off your propane, close all your windows, lock your doors. And then fill the streets with food for the bears, I call out. This suggestion meets a lot of resistance. We’ve been working for years to keep the bears out of town.  One option offered up is to put the food in the river when those last ones leave—I still want take all food from our neighbor’s doomed refridgerators and toss it into the streets, feed the blessed bears! There’s a long discussion about feeding the bears. Food for 250 people who’ll be gone, transported to elsewhere, somehow. Somewhere.

Turns out most who are still here want to stay. But they tell us *it’s impossible*! Access in will take months to complete, and winter's coming on. A fresh blast of thunder rolls through. This is the canyon that only helicopters can drive. This pile of stones and rubble, higher than my head, is the fresh new riverbed that used to be Lower Main St. Here is the sheer gulf, the cliff hanging emptiness that used to be our canyon road. I-25 is closed from Boulder to Wyoming.  Helicopters circle to land in a pitch-dark storm as we are heading home by torchlight. It’s pouring still. *Holy Shit* is a phrase that never runs out.

On the patio, in a break from the storm. It’s our last night to be here. I don't want to leave! I dig in, stubborn. Half moon waxing, Jamestown waning. The second helicopter of the night settles. Decide. Tonight. All day, Joy and I had both said NO WAY, we’re not leaving! Cos that was for the other people, folks with kids and jobs, folks who weren’t used to living off grid, without plumbing. Still, styrofoam pushes, circles dancing against the ruined bridges’ piers.

Saturday, Sept. 14th
People running with backpacks and dogs and kids as the army descends on Jamestown one last time in huge throbbing helicopters. Loud and terrible for hours, those blades reading Military Assault, reading Occupation, reading War...menacing images float and are shredded by the blades and more form in me still, forcing our dreams into cages, huddled like that for hours. They are *the rescuers*, the flood is *the enemy* force in this war, but I feel it all backwards. I would take the wild waters over the helicopters. I was exhausted with a split headache, a reflection of this conflict inside me. Unable to think anymore after crying all night long—surely there’d be other helicopters, other chances to get out. Yet somehow in the night while I cried, Joy shifted and began lobbying to leave—*It won’t be for long, Oak...we'll be back*— while I sobbed in her arms like a three year old—but I don’t want to go! In the end I just said *I’m not*

*leaving.*

Dreaded daylight and I'm still curled up, still  crying NO. Leaving Yashi and my beloved houseplants. How to get past all those green stares? We’ve been here a long time, and know all the volunteer firefighters. One friend, Michael, came up and together, he and Joy persuaded/ganged up on me. *I am not able-bodied* they told me. this was definitely true. After all the wild and reckless walking i’ve been doing, I could barely limp around anymore. *We can’t spare anyone to help you, Oak, you would be a liability.* Suddenly, we hear the chopper coming—*Go! Now! Go!*—We hear that final sound and it pushes our cold toes off the inexorable edge of the high diving board—*Now*! he

insists.

We give our old wolf-hybrid Barny a Xanax and some more pot oil, leash the dogs and I gimp on down the mountain. Our most precious shit hauled in backpacks and pillowcases, we push downhill toward that terrible roar. Michael is our mule, and we reach the frenzied park with the freaked out dogs and the FEMA water bottles, but they turn us back. Too full. Another copter is coming as this one lifts away. Just below our house, tilted gently down toward that violent roaring and the brown water, the air fills with angry blades crouching over the whipped up, wiped out road, coming down to land into all that. And i watch the surreal scene of figures rushing for it with kids and pets and bundles,  herded by men and women in yellow hard hats and khaki mud-plastered government-issued trousers. Their kindness. Our choiceslessness. Tiny plastic water bottles crowd the big new stage above the grass that never had a chance. i

The fascism of the moment hovers over all in his tall shiny black boots. He flicks his iron whip and everything changes. He insists, and the ground disappears beneath the canyon road, *crack!* He imagines it, and Joey is dead as our options fall like houses into the flood, our lives suddenly shrunk, desiccated as rich fat rain fills the world like amnesia covering all that we

know that we are.

And yet another copter’s coming right behind. Barny’s collar needs tightening so Joy can drag him forward—he’s on enough Xanax and pot oil to drop a rhino and still, four men and Joy fight him up that ramp as dear sweet Pearl walks next to me, terrified but obedient on her leash. The sound is astounding, and the heat rushing all round us, and the flattened grasses, the whining of dogs and metal gears and we’re in, we’re up the green steel ramp, and they sit me next to Alan, Mark and other firefighters and I cannot stop crying, all the way to Boulder. Someone takes a picture—me flashing a peace sign.

Twelve minutes. Years after, I’ll still be up there, like some photograph my body had taken. And the storm moving out at last, a flinch in my memory. A child’s etch-a-sketch dissolves in time as the sky shakes itself out, the rain dissipating pixel by pixel, nothing left but the breeze and the light. The consequences, vivid, for years to come. And the army hands us off to the waiting cops on the landing strip, and there's animal control officers offering biscuits and water for the dogs, and coffee and pastries for us, and it’s early morning in the Boulder airport, and we call Kara and she's coming. There are so many busses and dogs and tears and a boatloads of warm caring, welcomes that float above the flood,  and we find Derdra and she takes us to Niwot High, then Kara picks us up and takes us

home to Louisville.

Time rolls like a marble, like a cat. A gorgeous black and white cat in the jade green hallway. Life rolls like those magnificent waves of the river I never said goodbye to. Like the hot air shredded through our ears and the gears of bladed army rescue copters. The hot wind that rolls through my psychotropic nights, dreamless, pain-killed, memory-filled and dry-softening like

ashes. I cry for a week.

8 Weeks Later, and Home

There’s so much paradox now, and irony. The helicopters that land and take off, rescuing us, over and over, are army attack helicopters, forged for war. The army bears us up and down, the folks who take us when we land, tender and vulnerable evacuees in a strange land, are the cops, who i’ve hated on sight my whole life. But behind the uniforms, they are kind. Next, the Feds, who were patient and kind, who surrendered up checks and offers of assistance, and FEMA, and the Red Cross, the Salvation Army all piled gifts at our still wet feet. The big machines and their men, big stinky roaring heretofore terrible men and awful machines dug out the rubble, built roads and bridges, sculpted gentle slopes from harsh cliff edges, saving us. I only use small power tools, blenders and vibrators, always really hated the these destructive machines on sight, and cursed them on

principle.

On the second week, the Texas Baptist Men arrived in force, set up a presence in our town, and totally blew my little mind. Not all Baptists carry “God hates fags” signs at funerals, not all are racist and misogynistic and ignorant. The Texas Baptist Men, and their womenfolk, came into my life and my town as bible-thumping heroes. I’m telling you, they were fucking Heroes! They transformed the landscape of Rubbleville, and they lifted us towards a light of hope. They were everywhere, everyday, ubiquitous in their yellow shirts and hats, working, plugged into their god’s invisible love, they give and give. Their average age,

72 years.

Contradictions. I struggle.  I stop struggling and start celebrating. This is the gift, Paradox.  it all complicates my rigidity, the walls falling echo, inside me; my head buzzes always now with the clang of fortresses falling—the hoof-ringing correction coming and shaking me and kissing me, and raising me up like the walls here in Jamestown, slowly. A connection, a glow in my hearth, fresh eyes in my heart fill me up and the harsh spikey stories i've told lie down, gentled as bedding for gardens where seeds warm winter with their tiny waiting, and I begin to learn to soften, to relax. I walk, carrying my life from side to side. Step. Limp. Step. Balancing like a

wire walker, all sureties lapsing into babble.

The Baptists are gone now; only one yellow hard-hat, nailed like an artifact to the town hall office where i’ve been volunteering a few days a week. And it's hard not to feel that I’m experiencing some tense in addition to the present. These trees, older than any person, fill my forest view. This Milky Way, these ancient stars, this passing in the breeze cloud, this conversation, this conversion, this land, altering beneath our breath, going to seed all around us. Fallowing. This orbiting dance of gravity-entropy-fate, the immutable laws of this place, sinking all this sand into

every tiny crevice.

Joy and I are 2 of about 20 people who’ve chosen to stay here through winter. I wander, wondering. What we have lost, what wants to become.  Swim in the flux, past piles of filed rubbish-that was our habits, that was our meaning, fluctuate like seasons, the wheel of light turning, the rubble ordering, sit in this angle of sun this morning with this tea and these dogs and feel it all opening like a fan, beating metronomes of shussshing. It's the Big Secret, the mystery of participation, not lost, this door to the cosmos has been waiting, always, framed by the residue of dreams, swinging on improbable hinges, step through Friend. Leave the gaping emptiness behind and find treasure here and now, extending ripples as I toss my stone into still waters and

change everything, again.

Shoved and stripped and suffering landscape; one perfect dandelion flower peeks smiling through it all. Paradox: hold me tight. Surround me in soft blankets as you stab me in the mind, over and over. Knead me like this. Soften. Soften. Forgive. Surrender. mind full of slashes spills over to relax.

November
To the south the land is pristine, unchanged.  Clouds chant past, ribbons veiling the tops of pines like cloud cheese through a sky grater. I hike with the dogs, growing stronger.
My feet find their imprints on this trail, engraved and reconnected to this perfect peace, eternal and unchanged.  The forest and I part and participate, we shine, we blow in winds, we call and recall, our recent past rots sweetly on our ground, we fall, we stand, we are indestructible remembrance, maps to other realms we hold in our molecules, our cells, for this….for this.

Golden meadow opens her wings in all directions, a body of light and seedheads glittering, a rough silk pocket, a promise, a prairie, and my mind, braiding beneath the big black crows. Ten thousand tress watch me here, pin me down to Now. Fill me with the One Reality. Bang me in the heart, stroke my eyes, close the circle of my mind like a nest. Gleaming hinges open and close and mountains lean in to hold me as i rehearse shapeshifting towards wings and tune my throat for the next iteration of me.

Oyster sky, dying season, late November. This is the dark and the cold lonely rest. Nest here with a thousand unnamed birds. With life underground, all warm breath and big plans for springtime. Wait, take new shape, ride this big black bird through the tunnel of tragedy and post-disaster recouperations. This town's a hospital with a great view, or a hospice in the biggest view. The river's a liquid oracle, flowing past.  Wild turkey tracks are arrows in the snow the size of my hand, pointing their path up the hill. Giant hiking birds. Stay safe y'all. Two days till thanksgiving.

Higher up a forest trail, the quiet is a silken roar to my ears. The sky is cobalt, the trees iron-silvered by sun. Time cracks the egg to this freshened morning snow-globe, this sparkle silent tableau, a nursery of trees, a grave resurrecting eternally. Old sentinels of pine and fir, these are the friends who greet me every snowy step of the way. Calumphing down the trail I make steam.

I built my house on purple rocks, on a nest deliberate as a crow. What I know about flow is a flood in September. And forests thick with cloud lust and bluejays. Above the destruction, just a slight beep-beep charge to the molecules of air, just the shadow-fact to our days, disturbed and reassured by the big machines below. Beeping like giant mechanical magpies. Season in flux, seeds crushed, leaves gone, heat still emanates from that ancient boss, the sun. I tell people Joy and I are going to write *Jamestown Flood:The Musical*. Most folks say it’s too soon. *Well, yeah, that’s why it’s funny.* Nobody laughs. I sigh, sigh again. Maybe not this year.

.

I walk the park loop. All so cleaned up and so exposed. Down here beside the creek, enormous tower of trees stacked in smashed memory of roots and birds nests and squirrel runs, earth mover and excavator neatly piled as possible and dwarfing the tennis court's 20 foot chain link. Packed with stones and swabbed in sand coats, giant puzzle of pick up sticks, broken bones, splintered, shredded, jagged jengas against the oceanic sky. Patterns of breaking and beginning again, the stardust of our bodies and the symmetry of autumn; austerity calling. I walk time in it's skeleton, learning that we are unlimited by our bodies.  Fold me into the world batter like that. The last roaring of the huge machines spins a circle round us, furious and kind.

Dusk coming now.

December
Heated leather seat beneath me, sun warming the world around me, an elegant luxury humming my name in a borrowed Subaru. Hurtling over and past Rubbleville, bound for Babylon again. My commute’s gone from 25 minutes to an hour and a half to get to work, but most days I enjoy it. Great beat on the radio rocks me round the high curves past Ward, and the pyramids of 14-ers rockin' back. This bronze meadow is a soufflé whooshed and settling in full views of the Divide. I follow two semis, and three semis follow me. Trucks carry giant pipes, culverts, & porta pottys, humongous trucks haul other slightly smaller trucks, hauling giant shovels. The sweet Peak to Peak Highway

is an industrial corridor now, it's I-25 in the sky.

Nederland reservoir. The lake, chained to banks, breaks, blasting surf and splinters against the dam of today, again. I pull over. The shine of heaving, heavy water leans hard, leaps at the dam like a dog at the door, driven. The shimmy-restless body where this thinnest mist jumps the dam barricade, making a wish on freedom. Rocks watch, growing nostalgic and soft for the wild wishing, the splish splashing of water under the hammered silver surface. A thousand textures grab me, hold me here. Simple as a seed. Simple as a mountain. Cars pass, race and scheme and steer down this canyon. Drivers pretend to control. *Ha!* I think.

And the reservior chanting back—*Water, Water, Water!*

Hearty cottonwoods light the way down. The color of sunshine, they lantern me all the way to Boulder, to Longmont. I leave the aspens behind, naked in the winds of 9,000 feet, remembering gold. My blood is thin and wild like me, like this torrential hundred year, million year flood, it hurtles through my body at waterfall rates. It races throughout the unexploded chambers of my heart, tidal in the arteries, pressure through the veins, hauling stones and trees, scrubbing me out. Volatile and powerful, shrinking and expanding, I’m learning slowly how to be the right size for my world, also not standard, also in flux.

My world.

Finally, we’re able to drive down. Down James Canyon, on *the goat trail*, first time in daylight. Goose bumps all over me, i cry, i shake, all the way down. Needing new words for rubble. Trees felled in the creek, car-sized rocks piled, I have to stop by the lovely meadow that was Madam Curie's Radium Spring and really let myself cry.  Asphalt like pastry, smashed. Every bridge for eight miles buckled, unbuckled. Some recognizable artifacts— Mattresses, dresser, crib, crushed car. Another. Another. I park at the confluence of James and Left Hand creeks, turn off the engine, open the window to the rage of wind, listen to waters echo off rock. Evidence neatly filed everywhere you look. Piles of cables. Plywood. Gates. Propane tanks. Hot tubs. Everything sorted. Imagine the physical world through the mechanical vision of a track hoe, wed to a dumpster.

Nighttime. My friends down below in cities don't know about starlight on broken stone, the final forest shading a cradle.  River breath. Star pulse. Moon coming back, over and over in this canyon, gouged by moonlight, enrubbled in starlight, you go slow. The lips of road are harsh,  gotta crawl in 1st gear.  I roll through in neutral, easing, crawling over and through. The scoured skirts of James Creek, one lane goat trail in the wolf hour of post-dusk. Yesterday was the 10 year anniversary of the last big fire that burned all the houses on the north side of town. Here’s Eliot's Pitch, a sharp turn to the SW and the river can't bear to take it at full volume. And so, the story goes,  the old-timey miners would stand up here in other flood times, pitching sticks of dynamite into the canyon to bust up the logjams.

At the Town Hall, volunteering, it’s a tightrope stroll leaping the cracks between philanthropic liason-ing, psychotherapy, and resource coordination.  Rebecca , coordinating it all, says, to no one in particular, "I had a fine moment this morning when one of the team leaders asked what they'd be doing in Jamestown. Well, it's JAMESTOWN, haven't you heard? Tell em to google it...shit!—look at it— they'll be doing THIS!" Mountains slow becoming dust and this mountain town  crouching, beaten down, wanting more life, giving so much love, taking so much rescue,

reminding me of me.

I walk up Ward Street, for the first time cleared enough to attempt it. This was, for decades, my favorite summer walk along the cool creek. Now opened like a wound, parted like a stone shattered sea. Still amazed that i can be this amazed. My breath stops at the sight of it. The earth is bruised with giant tire treads, culverts stacked and ready, and the creek, still looking like a river,  moved over to the other side of the road. Still fearlessly rushing. Still supercharged for November, pooling deep, running loud velvet shusshes, piled with big rocks, the rubble organized, civilized, order satisfied, i walk on. Past many volunteers, up here to help strangers recover. Past trash I can reach, and trash I can't. Plastic is everywhere now, laughing at our recycling efforts, fridge doors, and big screen tv's, sand stung Samsungs, and cars, and toilets and horizontal whole walls of houses, the wind seducing all materials down the trail of dust. A bunch of failed sandbags —*their drama shall not be forgotten*—beside a huge fallen fir that took out Karen Z's house. The creek keeps singing, writing and choreographing

*Jamestown Flood: The Musical.*
Late November
Disaster wallpaper wraps round our eyes daily, the majesty of Porphrey's Dike, the soft roar of the river. At the park, dead trees that were our friends, that were our lungs, our companions on the road are chunked, ripped silent masses of witness and evidence both. I go down to the river. I stand atop snow-covered rubble, watching asphalt hang a pouting lip over, rippled, ripped up and edged in orange cones like a giant's tacky necklace. Trees down here, willows, stand creekside, marked for always by the flood.  Big bites gnashed out, twice as tall as i am

standing, arms torn off, witness and evidence both.

Consider the untold tales of mute lumber. Of mud covered 2x4's, a nail stabbed section of roof, some tongue in groove, plywood circles, shingles, pink shreds of fiberglass, donkey dick, stovepipe, and a tire mired in mud. The parts greater than the whole, pick-up-sticks everywhere. Undo the process of creation

and here is what's left.

In the forest next morning, living trees are garlanded by sunshine and wind tunes. i don't tell them about the tower of trees in the park below.  Above and below, separated like Jamestown's community. Divided but connected still. Witness

and evidence, again.

December
Temperature passes snow on the way down. On the trail, I huddle under a big ponderosa and watch the falling. The road is terrible tonight, shredded to the 10th power. I am a stone on the side of the road in winter, sprayed with incomprehensible number system, in hot pink paint. I direct the giant vehicles and men in this emptied canyon under a lowering sky. On the goat trail, there's a whole new road to get used to, everyday. New drop offs, new cone placements, new big bumps. Passing neighbors and workers slamming their brave and suffering cars over a potholed dust snake.  There goes a Lexus. *Oh, please.*

January
10 a.m. A new road bed above the river rises. Flagged to stop and go by road workers, it’s a flip-book kaleidescope, a strobe of a journey up and down. This morning i drive down, semi-legally, following a big work truck, with the fire chief behind me. When we stop, I sit and watch the giant trucks line up to side-tip tons of stone over the edge of the road, watch a backhoe shove the enormous rocks into place, watch the heavy steel roller machine drive over it all, back and forth, packing the future gateway down. I sit now, coming home, 10 p.m and stoned, car turned off and pulled way over, rocking in these outrageous moaning winds that suffer the trees, buffet the air, over the fur of the sleeping bears. Wind insinuating into every

 crack of window and forest, fur coat and cave.

This canyon road is alive. The flood was a living thing and the recovery is a living thing. I depend for my life on this road, he is a steady flowing solid beside the rivers’ constant liquid. Huge, dented, mud-splattered golden trucks, tanks, dozers and hoes are constructing him back again, bashing him loose, prying trees and boulders from his shoulders, shredding these and growing out and up, and up, the plank of road rising like a window washer's scaffolding outside a skyscraper in my headlights under this full moon, the roadbed rises, panting my breath for the

effort of his resurrection.

This is an ode to the machines: the roar, the extraction of the machines, the diesel stink, the heaving tread, the early morning bang and beep, the holy miracle of something like forgiveness, mercy and power and humility all ground up like huge chunks of asphalt, a composite conglomeration used, re-used, all in the

name of continuing.

Spring, 2014
Remembering, pale stones tremble at the bottom of a god called Spring.  Waiting for it, remembering is stitched into the stacked twitching corpses of trees and shrubs. Culverts, pavement, new gorges tumble still, 6 months later in dreams of green that will soon soften all but the memories, and fit life will return, and hopefully, my friends will all  be back—soon, soon.

Six month in, enrubbled and over the enchantment of the adventure. It's just sad and exhausting to face everyday. The dead trees, the debris choking all life...it's spring, dammit, and i can't tolerate the gloom anymore. My town trembles on all edges, breathes shakily, stumbles forward. Life, freshened always, smiles through the tears. Heart exposed, bandana over my nose, roaring in my ears, forward. My eyes flash in the sun, moving restless between many iterations of the road we drive and the one river that rushes beside it. But, we’re alive—the residents who  made it, and made it back, the bruised exhausted road, the happy, happy river, and these witnessing eyes, all alive

and shining.

Passover. Icicles in moonlight on treees in the forest and fenders in the parking lot. Full moon seder. Fire and icicles. The wind blasts us with wet icy droplets and a bonfire roars at our feet and the full moon shows us to ourselves again, At the confluence, past pretzled guardrails and shredded steel bridges, James so much muddier than Left Hand from all the machines in her twisted flow, smell of willow rushes through my head, my chest, my body, all of me still and always fused to this event. Time pulling me down the fat braid of rope. My hip and these stones,

these bones, remember.

First rain, Here, the sequin shot land, driving under a hammock of horizon hung with green softness, let’s dangle here awhile. Pull over at the redstone cliffs lit with apple blossoms beside the song of river pouring brown, reminding me of flowing water in another time of rain. I drove a different car then. Was a different person. Oh, goddess of the sandbar. Goddess of the backwash, of new islands and flood worn commuter residents and those still away from home. This is the first rain. Trauma in the gather, in the clotting skies, trauma in the sudden humid breath, the fall of drops, the quickening. Trauma in the roar, the green holding its verdant breath with me. The past weighs heavy as all the

rocks in this ruined canyon.

I stand before the sandbox open-mouthed as a 4 year old boy, enraptured in wonder.  Elyssian Park—it’s May and this morning I think in my next life incarnation I wanna be a giant hydraulic front loader. And, I don't wanna be a truck *driver*, one of those dudes bouncing and skillfully spun all day behind heavy gears, I wanna *Be* the Gears. I wanna be the push, the lift, the shove, the DO. Backhoe, earth mover, track hoe, big purple dump truck parked across from the town hall. And Komatsu, giant backhoe! Ah, you!

Komatsu, i chant, climbing the mountain of mud Komatsu has built for himself. So easy to worship this god, this Mars, this action being. Up here, on Sunday, he rests supreme. His cab locked—yes i tried!—I peer into the inner sanctum, filled with warning stickers. O, Komatsu! Save us! Under the great arched neck of your iron trestle I sit on the bold bucket and write this down. You, i want you, transformer, great force turning the earth, spring rising all around. You rolling over every surface shouting “Yes! I can! Yes, I can!”