

Dreams should scare us, or fear will proceed to eat our soul

*Book
of Yet*

Ali Dipp

In awareness of a smokestack called Asarco, a place known as Los Alamos, an agreement named NAFTA, and a river cemented by the Chamizal Convention.

This Dust Was Once the Man

THIS dust was once the man,
Gentle, plain, just and resolute, under whose cautious hand,
Against the foulest crime in history known in any land or
age,
Was saved the Union of these States.

- Walt Whitman

Request Warrant and Promissory Note

From the Office of O'Malley and Singleton

April 14th, 1991

Lefty Westin,

Hi. I am the estate attorney in charge of the holdings of Manfred, the Disappearing Man, formerly known as Manfred, who went by first name alone. My client, who claims you know him directly, asked that you receive his urn along with the remaining assets inscribed in his will. Since I usually do not take the effort to evaluate the majority of my client's beneficiary letter of instruction, what I am doing here exemplifies an exceptional involvement on the part of my role as his estate attorney. As one of the top ten estate attorneys in the region, it is of my greatest intent to receive the compensation for what I am owed. My client, Manfred, the Disappearing Man, failed to leave the proper monetary

allotment to cover the charge of my 3% commission. In fact, the entirety of the estate, while formerly appraised at 20,400 Gold Notes, including his garage, horse, adobe house on 1473 Eastway Escarpment, Untitled Territory 23045, diminished into a near negligible monetary amount. He liquidated the assets listed to buy the iron needed to construct his spacecraft, Manfred's Explorer.

The financial decision to purchase iron from the Esquire Aspirant Iron Co. seemed advantageous to those aware of Manfred's fears of never reaching Horizon. Horizon City's incumbent senator, Jason Whithershire, was likely to commission Esquire Co. to build the barricade severing the river between Untitled Territory and Horizon City. While Manfred chose to prioritize his 'emotional needs,' I concur with his personal accountant that this decision proved financially unsound. He neglected to factor the other expenses he accrued. Manfred failed to qualify for a visa towards citizenship in Horizon City, because his seventeenth-century spoken verse, adorned with embellishments, no longer aligned to the English Writing Test's passable standards. He did not convey secure proficiency and figured that rather than moving to a more affluent sovereign state, he would attempt to rise into higher ambitions. Hence, he set his sights on the sun. According to the investment bankers who supplied the monetary backing for an unsecured loan, his reasoning was simple. This unsecured loan amounted to a little over 3,400 Gold Notes.

The bank ensured that he would back this amount with his husbandry and riparian assets. The appraisal on these assets proved comparable to the loan. After receiving financial backing from the bank, Manfred decided to aim for the sun to stabilize life in one of the last hospitable domains in the universe.

This context predated the day he came to my downtown office on Creekview to request a notary for the will. He came with a piece of paper with a hand-written appraisal of all his properties and earthly belongings. To describe his demeanor, I might enlist the aid of a euphemism—‘shabby.’ Based on my background of establishing best practices with each new client I enroll into our repertoire; I asked him to reconsider the format of the will. While surely other practitioners in my field would opt to refuse such a client, I treat matters of the afterlife with reverence. Being one of two estate attorneys in the two hundred Ge-Kilometres of Untitled Territory, I felt a responsibility for this person. Instead of outright rejecting him, I encouraged him to receive our complementary will template. Bringing him to the back, we negotiated that I would serve not only as his attorney but also as his notary. I revere people who approach clients with more trust than doubt. I still expect him to make good on my 3% commission. He is now liable to reimbursing my fee, which according to the appraisal from the previous calendar year, amounts to roughly 640 Gold Notes.

However, there are other fees and expenses resulting from the misfire. When he exploded into thousands of smatterings, he did so prior to surpassing the troposphere. This means that his carnage of organic smatterings fell back onto earth rather than remaining suspended at an elevation high enough to reach zero gravity. The organic matter, remarkably distinct due to its deep charred hue and knotty composition, differs from the bleached dust around Las Palmas. Since scouts could easily discriminate between the cremated ash and the white sand native to the area, Manfred's remains proved effectively retrievable. However, to collect the 200 pounds of debris required a brigade of hazmat-suited sanitation workers to search the premise surrounding the explosion's proximate location. Since the wind that day reached highs of 73 g-kph, his dust diffused over an even larger distance than first hypothesized. This required the recovery crew to spend an additional two days of effort and labor to retrieve the last evidence of the event.

Now, while I took pains to explain the fallout of the explosion in the last paragraph, Untitled Territory functions as a republic. Although it is almost certain that Horizon will annex Untitled Territory in the forthcoming years, the Untitled Territory's Bureau of Human Rights subsidized the monetary efforts to fund the Crime and Trauma Scene Decontamination (CTS Decon). Based on the precarity of the republic, they often do not fund such labor-intensive ventures like the one I described in the former paragraph.

However, since Manfred had little by way of support from friends and other living affiliates, the Bureau of Human Rights initiated the CTS Decon effective for four days after the raining discharge. The Bureau did not proceed from charitable impulses. You are welcome to see how the agency worded their reasoning in the publicly published Bureau of Human Rights Task Force Fund statement released on March 17th, 1989.

I already delineated some of the costs resulting from Manfred's flight. However, I must oblige a last and more longstanding cost his endeavor produced. In the past few weeks, some findings from Untitled Territory's main public health task force, the Untitled Territory Center for Infectious Diseases (UTCID), described the thin film from Manfred's dust plume to include traces of dioxins and polyaromatic hydrocarbons. Beyond the damage caused by organic matter, Manfred also decorated his shuttle with several intricate designs. For these designs he liberally applied Titanium White paint sourced from the discontinued Buck and Barrel brand. The decision to include the painted emblem on the shuttle added to the latent traces of asbestos in the ship's iron body. From this debris, the mature population of Untitled Territory will likely see a reduced life span expectancy.

With the initial 'Hi' of this letter, I meant to be curt in my note to you. As you can tell, listing the damaging results of Manfred's trip required ample efforts. Although I would ask

a client to pay upwards 40 billable hours for such a note, Manfred currently cannot afford the commission for the initial will. As a result, I send you this note along with a package.

The bundle includes a trifecta of manuscripts. The first document, causally titled *Water Poems*, is a series of poems published eight years ago. Since the book ran through a self-proclaimed ‘indie press’ in the northern country, this collection of poems served as an heirloom to Manfred. His daughter wrote the collection. After the estrangement between him and his daughter, Manfred represented the last of his lineage. Since there would not be anyone after him to receive the poems, Manfred decided to annotate the work. At parts, deduced from contextual circumstance, he refers to you, Mr. Westin. The next manuscript, *Twenty-Four Letters of Impossibilities*, serves as Manfred’s magnum opus in the domain you both contribute to: the Perceptual Sciences. In fact, he also notes you as a mentor in certain passages. For reasons I will explain briefly, it might be advantageous to seek publication for this piece. However, I wonder if his seventeenth-century diction will prevent you from easily finding a publisher. The third manuscript, made by his daughter, Anonymous, came into my portfolio recently. Her letter precedes the manuscript.

Along with the collection of manuscripts, the package includes the urn where Manfred sits and stirs on occasion.

After the CTS Decon team amassed an appreciable sum of the remains, they gave the urn back to me. I serve as the main principal for matters concerning Manfred's bereavement. Now, I include his urn on the count of two reasons. First, out of anybody else, Manfred most commonly cites your influence. Secondly, while he is not with us in flesh, he still retains the power to speak to us, even after the sun cremated his body. There is one critical element barring or liberating his speech: people's will to believe he is still a human. In simple terms, if you recognize his personhood, you can hear him. Otherwise, he's just dust in an urn.

Upon his will's request, he asks that his body find the serenity of the next life along the river. He most endearingly wishes that the currents will wash toward Horizon. Although it is imperative to honor this request, I ask that before you do, keep his urn by your bed and scribe what he says. Keeping him in my office, I overheard his oration at least ten times in the past few months. Listen to his dictation and write it in manuscript form. Upon publishing his memoir, wire the 640 Gold Notes. I suggest altering his prose to better suit the standard English diction.

This literary modification will likely benefit both the reader and your manuscript's advance. However, on a further note if you do not comply with this request, I will be forced to divulge an episode Manfred recounted to me recently. According to his account, during his mentorship under your

tutelage, he cited overlooked discrepancies in the statistical data in your fourth article in the *Perceptual Sciences Journal, Eye*. If the scientific community knew of your liberal reading, they might describe your latitude as generous in the best light and unsound in the worst case. Disclosing this occurrence would, undoubtedly, force Mainland College of Cosmological Mining to revoke your yearly pension as a Professor Emeritus. With your prodigious output during your years as a tenure-track faculty member, I am sure you will receive the advance for the book in a year's time. When ready to wire the funds, call Cynthia Bark at our office phone: (235) 293-1349.

Richie Singleton, J.D.
Office of O'Malley and Singleton
18509 Creekview, Suite 35
Untitled Territory, 78842

First Day of a New Life

An Excerpt from the *Epistolary Episodes of Lefty Westin*
April 20th, 1991

I, Lefty Westin, indulge the merriments of the golden hours of my golden years from a coastal vista. That's partially why I even entertained Pilar Bintéraz's Realtors R US, Helping U® number, (788) 352-1596. I greased the phone's buttons as I dialed in to inquire about 105 Coffin Street, a property that my eyes preened over for oh-so-many-moons.

The wind tousled across Bunkins Ave. as I jaywalked to get nowhere quickly. About to step back onto the sidewalk, a yellow paper plastered itself on me. Before I could strip the paper off, on the top left corner, even in its low quality black and white image, I recognized the property. *105 Coffin Street. A pavilion porch sure to allow you the chance to attend to your literary fiction in the evening. Hardwood floors with planks of oak spanning the thickest width—even throughout its length for a finished line. River within twenty paces from your backyard. Refrigerated air adept with the wicking technology*

to dry your linen towels after a swim. Proper scaffolding for your ever-growing, second-floor personal library. A view so unrivaled that you'd make friends envious. The brochure on yellow printing paper spoke in a tone boasting such grandeur that if in a different circumstance, I would otherwise dismiss what the flyer was selling. However, long before jaywalking Bunkins Ave. to bustle hastily towards nowhere in particular, only to find the paper stuck to my rotund belly impinged on my side by the wind, I long prized what the brochure promoted. 105 Coffin Street was a gold fleck in the pan. For years, 105 Coffin Street served as a site of endearment to me as I scrupulously scouted for a house to rest my 'weary bones.' Even before the brochure could persuade, I already adored the domestic jewel for all its myths. Yet, the myths were not so bold and beautiful that the house could ever pronounce itself into history. In fact, much of the lure around 105 Coffin Street mirrored the same provincial promises that brought me to settle on this river basin. *Sunday grill pit BBQ for those invested in the appreciation of this fine life. Juleps in July. The grace and amenities of the Adirondack chair where I sit with my Penguin Classic cold-pressed book pages under two thumbs.* I endeavored to redeem the promise of property and flirt with noble, but altogether attainable, aims such as the figment of happiness.

I always admired 105 Coffin Street on the Thursday nights that I would drive by after work. I would pull out a six pack, *Dos Equis*, to look at the property while sitting on the hood

of my car. I assumed the house to be vacant long before they set a sign into the front yard's sod. Even as I admired the house long before the owner put it up, I would hardly attribute my appreciation to an astute eye. Predicting its vacancy was not a testament to my common-sense doing God's work. Rather, during my drive-by episodes, when I would admire the house, I did so because at the time of my interest, my willingness to fork rent towards my apartment wavered. In my elbow patch-bearing modesty, I'd spent innumerable years paying rent to the only landlord I ever had, Suzie Carter.

As salt-n-pepper became white and white thinned, the pearlescent luster of my scalp peaked through the frail veil of stringed locks. I began combing the little I had back in a pitiful fashion. I never understood why so many balding men tried to keep their vain dreams and thinning hair. Old men and their attempts to brush back their scant mane conveyed what little remained from their bushel of tresses. Many a balding man blames their sons as the swindlers of their once glorious mane. While I didn't have any sons to place the blame, I kept all the shame of growing tattered. However, while I was losing my hair, I still maintained an effusive air, plenty more than my modest britches might bear. Losing hair but maintaining my air, I knew the era of my emeritus tedium crept closer to reality, and I had a three-quarter years' crisis at seventy-eight. Suzie Carter accepted my announcement that I would be breaking my lease. She even offered to sell the

apartment to me. But from the bowels of my brief plight of despair, I itched to escape the modest property that suited me well for nearly half a century. If anyone knew me, they would call my sudden repulse a ‘haughty’ turn, assuming I was too arrogant for the 430 square Ge-Metres that proved fine for fifty years. However, the time to move came upon me in a sudden gust. I justified my senselessness by determining that to aspire is to outgrow comforts.

In a thrashing revolt against what I accepted my entire life, I now bickered and bucked at the prospects of spending an entire earthly eternity in the apartment that could mark my first and last move. So, with a healthy dose of pomposity, I sought to make good on the promise of the upper-middle class life that first drew me to the professoriate. Scouting the home from the green-tinted view of my ’72 Chevy Townsman, wood trim and lattice adornment drew my lust. So, when the copper-paned windows called for me, I couldn’t keep my endearment for 105 Coffin Street at bay. Over the years, I developed a desire deep enough to ring insatiably. Without much understanding, I found myself snapping against paradigms prominent in my life as I knew it.

— “And only for that figure?”

“And *only* for that figure.,” Bintéraz knew that the best sales pitch came not from ingenuity, but by the frail echo of repeating what the customer wanted. And since proud men always assume they know what they want, her finessing

proved seamless insofar that she answered her customer's questions in echoes.

— “That part of the river's embankment, mine?”

“That part of the river's embankment is yours.”

— “One bedroom and a study?”

“One bedroom and a study.”

Rather than mirror the grandeur broadcasted on the brochure, I appreciated Bintéraz's humility. Her statements disclosed nothing more and nothing less than what the property presented. A realtor like her appeals to my taste because it doesn't seem like she's fixing a deal to spite me. Rather, I began to believe, just like she did, that this “house belonged to me” and that its tasteful wrought iron “fulfilled destiny's dreams.”

I never once considered the logic that made my heart swell and race when I fawned over chipped plaster balusters or swooned over the Grecian Urn emblem that mounted the lightning rod. Bintérez noted the lightning rod to be, “fanciful, for poets and lovers of Elliot.” In a visceral reaction to the cosmetic embellishment, I found myself both delirious and dizzy over the inordinate abundance of charm. However, if now I recall the episode as a spell of inebriation and a dash of fury. After all, if the home really did fulfill destiny's dreams, then I would be in a sorry state if my achievements ultimately amounted to a one-bedroom house. I forgot about the high-flying aims that I first sought to achieve—discovery, gold, possibilities abound in a world too new for words. Hearing the creaks of the floors and palming the solidity of

the cured plaster with my hand, I thought of more immediate interests rather than aspirations of the ostentatious variety. I remembered the material benchmarks I still sought to reach, the dogs named Little Bit and Happy or a walk-in closet for my twenty identical khakis. Evidently, I saw how this house could respond to my material deficits. I never questioned how aims are inherited by standards we don't set. I instead thought about the individuality and altogether unique novelty of writing my name under the title of a property known as 'mine.' I forgot how the aspirations that wrinkled my face into a furor and frown lines led me to believe this fine Tuesday evening, in touring the house, we partook in an event that could redeem my decades of work. A life of the mind and all its labor might have brought about a fatigued heart, but it also presented me the chance to call this mid-century bungalow 'mine.'

"Your house." She first said these words, but then I grew to inherit them as my own.

— *"My house—addressed at 105 Coffin."*

"Your house, 105 Coffin." She parroted smoothly, ensuring that I would not think of her responses as cunning. Hearing my own words reiterated back to me made a decent deal irresistible.

Her real estate company's eye sore of a name, Realtors R US, Helping U®, didn't help her or do her many favors. Instead, the compulsive decision to sign for the property on site testifies to the success of her modest maneuvers. Flipping out

the Derby Ballpoint from my pocket protector, I signed my chicken-scratch John Hancock on the purchase agreement with an ease formerly foreign to me.

I haven't regretted it since. However, every now and then I wonder the difference between bold and dangerous actions. Only now carving a wee dent into the mortgage, I am paying my fair share for my bold purchase. Between beautiful and brash acts, a thin distance separates the costly from lucrative. I couldn't tell the difference between a stunning and stupid decision, as I saw the pull of my signature's 'W' at the start of 'Westin' reach a height surpassing the other letters of my name. In the reverie of the deal, I at once felt the elation of reaching a decision without the cost of its responsibility.

Settling into the suburban lifestyle I bought into, I now account for the weight of the cost every month when paying the mortgage bill. The burden is evermore punctuated when I pay the property tax. The weight of cost, I think about, as I let my seated weight move with the sway from the rocking chair's fulcrum. *Seeee, creee*, the sound of the rocking chair rolling back and forth across the oak wood panels. In needle-point concentration, this eve, I feel most everything and do most nothing else aside from reading what one of my colleagues published on the forty-second page of the Fall '91 edition of *Eye*. While retired, it hardly behooves me to disband from every predictable habit. How else could I fill Friday nights, if not to concern myself with the state of the

affairs in our scholarly discipline? I kept my eyes peeled on the newest advances. And to do so, I did not have to read voraciously, since the new advances occur quite slowly now, as our discipline wanes in purpose. After all, the earth we live in drastically changed due to our recent history and its ‘unforeseen events.’

In the living room, the rocking chair sits beneath the second floor, and *pit, pith, pitch, pinch*. A speck of something touches the head. Moving my hand across the strings of hair that I raise with more mousse than warranted, I feel for a speck. I locate whatever supplanted itself on the top of my head. Removing it from the follicle fray, I see in the palm of my hand a peel of paint. I can assume the fragment floated from the ceiling because this is not the first. Stopping my rocking, the *seeee, creeettt*, continues, and I realize that it is not the creek of the chair. Instead, it is something worse that I knew would happen but hoped would not.

Advancing up the staircase, facing the living room, the second-floor ellipses the view of the first. Just as my view line surpasses the first floor; I notice how the wooden ceiling bulges toward gravity. I can tell, because that the planks of the wooden ceiling wilt beyond the beams that scaffold it. The weight’s pressure stresses the wood. While once flat, the ceiling heaves under the burden of the weight from the second floor’s library. Opening the door to the study on the second floor, I quickly expunge the newest addition to the

study: the cardboard box to the left of the door. No matter the hundreds of books, the modest sum of your ashes is heavy enough to make the ceiling bulk. Perhaps, the weight of life, while a metaphor, can still be dense.

It is not all that heavy, but backs can break over the tiniest additions to the load. I bring the box down, which is small enough for me to carry as I press it to my chest. Walking with my left leg first, the stroke, bless my little heart, impels me from keeping my movements balanced. Back at the rocking chair, I resume a quick *seeee, creeet*, so it sounds more like a *secret*—like the word ‘secret.’ Using the bowie knife to cut a sliver across the cardboard package’s crystalline box tape, I unearth what I expect to be the second package from Richie Singleton, J.D. Office of O’Malley and Singleton 18509 Creekview, Suite 35 Untitled Territory, 78842. I expect, since cargo shipment takes more time than letters to arrive in this neighborhood near the banks, the letter already disclosed what I am set to unearth. Sure enough, as predicted by the letter’s forewarning, in removing the anti-static pink packing peanuts, *fsss, fssss*, tossing them aside, I see the top of your urn. Exhuming the parcel from the package, I look at you in full sight.

Under my breath, I mutter,

— “Man, I’ve seen this thing at Florpink’s Pharmacy, cheap.”

M—mmp: drumming fingers on the hollow of the lid. *M—mmp*. I probably wouldn’t choose the faux pearl casement for

the urn if it was up to me. Thinking about what I might request my urn's color to be, my thoughts are taken from my scholastic concerns over which undertaker to choose for my forthcoming dying day.

To my surprise, you reply, "Man?" Well, no. Ever since the explosion, my officiated name has been widely circulated as Manfred, the Disappearing Man."

While Singleton noted that to hear you, I had to believe that you were worthy of personhood, I did not realize that I already seemed convinced of your dignity as a person, because I could hear your feigned British accent clear as the crystal menagerie in the open-faced cabinet. Against science's most esteemed virtue of skepticism, I was amazed at my faith. Maybe I had more justice in my heart than I anticipated, or maybe I wanted to believe in a good story when the chance presented itself.

— "You'll always be 'Man' to me," I said.

"Lefty, is that you?"

— "You heard right. I guess you can't see now."

"It has been three score since I heard your voice."

— "History contains everything, while it's time escapes us."

"I always admired a quick-witted phrase. You're still the only person who's ever called me 'Man.'"

— "I fancy I'll continue, Man." I enjoyed hearing you, bloke, even though I postponed opening the package for a week, because I didn't want to

begin writing the book just yet. If you were the same as you once were, I'd be hard-pressed to shut you up once you begun.

In bringing you downstairs, I had exhumed the newest package placed in the study, yet I still feared the ceiling would buckle, and my anxiety, without sane reason, continued to exacerbate this evening. I bring you out to the porch's sunroom, where my box of cigars lay on the round-faced frosted glass table. You noticed the move,

"The heat deepens further."

— "We are just in the sunroom, not reaching the sun anytime soon."

You chuckled with all the muster a pile of dust without a belly might produce. I sat, flicking a match across the powder-coated metal legs of the table and brought it to my lips. *Phheeee, www*—inhaling so the embers trail towards the other side of the cigar. From the windows on the sunroom façade, the glass' reflection caught the light warming the end of the cigar. When I first purchased the home, the daylight would erase the presence of the glass, making the windows a seamless grid against opal blues and meridian saffron. Now, the darkness made prominent the dusted glass. Looking at the windows, the dark sky against the glass only reflected my home's lit interior. The windows, now serving as a mirror, presented the cigar's lit fuse alongside the living room behind us, with its hurricane lamp enlightening the rocking chair.

The ambient lights speckling the house dotted the sunroom's wall of panned glass, reflecting back where I lived rather than what we faced. However, there was not much to see anymore. I laughed to myself as I remembered the brochure that first enticed me to purchase the house. *A view so unrivaled that you'd make friends envious*, while formerly true, was no longer the case. There's no view to be had.

You ask, "What beckons your line of sight, Westin?"

— "I've been out of the job."

"If someone as well-revered as you found quits in the academe, who else could possibly remain?"

— "Manfred, we used to have a lot of words to describe the changing light. There's no need for that anymore."

"But you didn't answer, likely out of a habit of being coy. What beckons your ocular perspective now?"

Man, you're well-respecting in your question, but the prodding perturbed me. While I once adored you for your loquacious diction, talking to you exhausts me. Your probes work well for science and less so for colloquial conversation. Other than smacking your urn to shards, I had few means to subside the onslaught of your interrogations. To try to describe what you could not see and to describe the nothingness of this dark hour, I had to resort to something of a fiction. But I am never sure how close fiction is to lying. Pings of hot ash fell from the cigar onto my favorite plaid

shirt. *Frrst, frrst*, flicking the slag off before it scarred a burn into the shirt, I looked around for the ashtray. I just now remember that the ashtray broke in my stumping, drunken freefall from a few nights ago. A 'Viva México' New Year's ashtray cast in venetian glass from my father's, Rufus Westin, last escapades abroad in the American continent. Since our tristate area is west of American continent, such trinkets are rare collector's items. I could have sold that tray for a reasonable quote online being that it was a foreign antique from the Old World. Without the ashtray, it seemed crude to tip the ashes off onto the ground, although it would easily remedy the situation. Sitting on the beige rattan, left hand on the cigar and right palm on top of the urn, I decided to flip your top open and siphon off the cigar's peeling into your body.

You didn't seem to notice the slight inflection of heat and debris on your mound. You asked if the sun was evident from where we sat and I returned your question, "What beckons your ocular perspective now?" with the reply of "No longer the sun." You ask why. I cannot tell you what we no longer have to our names. I pay the mortgage to maintain the title of the property, but there is no view anymore, none at least worth noting. I first came to the Perceptual Sciences because my sense assumed that there was always something to be seen. Because of our perceivable world, unlike most academic jobs, hiring needs brought about a constant supply of jobs in the perceptual fields. As I bore holes in my retina squinting at the

sun, even with impaired vision I could see quite evidently, “There’s never a short supply of sun in Horizon.” Since there was always something to observe, there’d always be a demand for practitioners of sight and sense.

The scientific field demanded eyes to document the sun’s variant shades of light. While I wanted to first become a Physicist of sorts, I’ve never fallen out of love for the eventual vocation of my choosing. The Perceptual Sciences not only stimulated me with its disciplinary questions, but my field endowed me with the means necessary for a down payment on 105 Coffin Street. Whenever I became introspective and set my gaze inwards instead of towards the visual stimuli important to my field, I became entrapped in questions of fulfillment and the like. So, at times when I felt vulnerable about the idiosyncratic nature of my intellectual pursuits, I would retort against an innocuous, “How are you?” With something like, “I make a living off my passion, and many can’t say the same.” My nieces and nephews understand me to be defensive because of this behavior. When my sister’s daughter, an aspiring illustrator stuck in the aura of the arts, asks about the purpose of my work, I retort with, “At least my work contributes to a field of knowledge” or something like “The formal sacrifices I makes for the discipline, such as writing articles and book reviews, testify to the larger significance of my efforts.” While I try to bribe her over for an afternoon of brownie baking or fishing, she kindly declines, stating factors like ‘the weather’ or ‘the commute

from Horizon's main bridge.' While I am bound to the same career-choice insecurities as everyone else, it was not until recently that my vocation appeared as frivolous to others as I always felt it to be. Without the light of the sun in any discernible vicinity, the little application for my work wanes into zilch.

"What do you most cherish in your daylight inferences nowadays?" Manfred asked.

You asked with your even-kill etiquette. It makes my toes curl. Should I say that from the northern view, with the tepid coolness of consistent light, that shadows have a temperature less severe than the south? Or maybe I might wax on how the evening invites a dust veneer that entraps the scene, bringing warmth throughout the entire picture. The extent of the mountains, two slopes, transform in pale blues that deepen in intensity according to the nearness of each range. The deeper the blue, the closer the mountain. And the birch trees encircle the perspectival extent of the scene. Below us a waterfall trickles, *treeeee, trriiicckkk*, the sound of water in movement. The waterfall separates us from the cleft cliffs we face on opposite banks of a limpid stream. Instead of Untitled Territory, we are in the American Hudson River Valley. You have a scratch you want to itch on your linen suit. I adorn myself a vestment of corduroy accompanied with a burlap hat to shield from the sun. We often look at that sun 'down yonder,' as fellows in the Perceptual Sciences Academy do.

The former solitude of our parallel lives is now replaced by the intertwining of kindred spirits.

I can wax on over this scene. Either by your gullibility or earnestness, you might take the words I say as truth. You could presume this is what you would see from our sunroom if you still had eyes. However, it hardly takes a fool to see what's in front of me. In truth, I am not looking out the windows at all. I am not exploring inwardly, too. I am looking to the side of the wall of windows and describing everything I see in the hackneyed, jaundiced-tinted print of Asher B. Durand's *Kindred Spirits*. However, no matter the believability of the painting's afternoon light, its light does not translate, and no warmth can quite reach us here, as the atmosphere thickens with soot. The particles in the air outside the sunroom's windows block us from warmth. So, the painting maintains itself as a warm image incapable of cutting across the cool.

Looking at the painting reminds me of everything that is no longer here. There are impermissible views and sights estranged from us. The painting is one of only a few items left in the house from the previous owner. However, this was not always the case. No amount of Thursday night drives could ensure I would predict the effusive excess lodged inside of 105 Coffin before the transfer of title. Since I was the first to inquire over the house, Pilar Bintérez hardly had the chance to dust it as it was. So, I witnessed the property in the entirety

of its convolution—stacks of paper towering at nearly every corner. 105 Coffin served as the house of E.G. Essex, a nighttime patrolman station at Untitled Territory's Western Bank Base Camp of the Geographical and Cosmological Society of Scholars. He sought to write a 'memoir of merit,' according to his will. However, after dying only weeks after March 18th, 1989, Essex failed to conclude his efforts. This former owner, who died in the living room, suffered from dehydration.

The cause of death likely also arose from his unwavering attention to his work and neglect of his worldly belongings, such as the property or his body. As an aspiring writer, he tried laboriously to pen his initial book to paper. While the stacks of legal pads served as a testament to his attentive efforts, the old bachelor exhausted before the manuscript could in fact be called a book. Pilar Bintéraz generously organized an estate sale to divest the myriad of material relics left within the confines of the house. During the estate sale, a woman purchased the paper, claiming the 15 Gold Note price a fair trade. She told me that she would flip the paper at the Utilities and Recycling Center to secure an adequate return on investment from her initial purchase of the pages. Now that paper is in short supply, the resource is a profitable asset. Men with waxed penny loafers and women in seersucker dresses came out in droves to clammer over the house with their horse-hoof-*clickity-clank* heels and aromatic colognes. They purchased and tagged items, and in the span

of an hour, all but three visitors remained, forking through the pile hoping to uncover something that wasn't yet tagged as 'purchased.' Due to the diplomatic wagers of the past decade, the chance to glean new products fell into the sparse occurrence of an estate sale. Witnessing the vivid demand for this unknown writer's personal belongings, I wondered why more murders didn't arise to increase the frequency of estate sales.

The only bones left that didn't fly off the shelf were the paintings. I retained the allotment of nineteenth-century American romantic landscape prints. While I kept the images, I had no idea that these works would serve as the remnants of a landscape now cast into undying night. However, I rarely gave the images the time they deserved, and only in trying to find a way to appease your question of what I witnessed from the window, did I happen across the unexpected value latent in these prints of old paintings belonging to bygone landscapes. In looking at *Kindred Spirits*, I remembered that I had forgotten to straighten the picture's verticals. While I've done my fair share of looking, I lacked the trained eyes to sufficiently notice when a painting leaned ajar. With a flinch of the wrist to the slightest degree, I moved the frame to resolve the picture's off-balance composure. It seemed straight now. I looked at it and thought about the relative ubiquity of such an image, a print so commonplace that it was neither provoking nor offensive. An image so quiet that I didn't start thinking about the

imminent value of the picture until right now. *Pleuuuuu, uu* taking the dust off with a brush of gust. The plume hits my head as I forget how close I am to the frame. Stepping back, I marvel at the piece. However, it is only in the deficit of what I can't see that night that makes me fawn over the otherwise expectable instance of a bucolic arcadia.

With your questions that preen over the void, I find your prodding instinctively irritating. However, I couldn't just say the night felt like a metaphor for something larger, because that there would seem trite. And I was not about to disclose the sorry state of the world in one fell swoop, today's situation is too enormous. The world in its condition wrecked wildly and rampantly around us. As to why I persist quietly in my house and not say what I see or feel, my hesitancy to speak might seem drivel to readers far from this sunroom. But how else can stories continue, if not by reinterpreting the blatant and obvious? Beginning this manuscript about you, Man, just one man, I doubt that I will want to arrive at similar conclusions as the previous owner of 105 Coffin, who died in the paper trail of many trials.

However, tonight, like many other instances, I will skirt away from saying what I see when I look towards the world. After all, stories are only partially made from what we said, and primarily made by our guessing and misinterpreting. Our stumbling over different ways to describe the night, or our hapless attempts to hear what the other person meant yet

refused to say. And as the author of any decent book will note, stories have little weight if we say what we mean. Entire plots are made by the errors we keep when we can't know. So, of course, I was not about to lean on the tired metaphor of sunlight and daybreak, because what sentimental fool would be caught being that sincere? Shout out some expectable line like, *Tomorrow...!* or *Tomorrow's another day* or *Tomorrow will greet us with a dawn*. None of these will do. I rather keep my sentiments far from sentimentality. I can't stand on a tired metaphor because the stories that run us are anything but expected or predictable. Sitting in this sunroom admiring the landscape of a painting more resplendent than anything the view holds, I start to see that everything here came into being from situations I couldn't expect. A misinterpretation of the future I thought was as destined as *tomorrow's daybreak*. Even my impulse to purchase this house arose from situations that I didn't anticipate. In the same room as the person who cast me into emeritus and robbed me of the golden years I envisioned, now I'm stuck with you, a man who forever changed us. Kindred spirits, right?

105 Coffin Street. A pavilion porch sure to allow you the chance to attend to your literary fiction in the evening. I remember the brochure and am reminded of why I initially wanted this sunroom. I intended to write that novel whose scenes I've fondled for years in my head. Keeping stories, I nearly forgot how much I wanted to write. Surely, this intent seems trivial now, especially as I blatantly disclose my intentions to write a

novel to you right now. However, as a small and precious care, I privately kept this little hope of being an author, eager to one day disclose ideas in the form of a bound book. Now, in place of such grand aims of fiction, I am tasked to document events that already arose—to chronicle another person's life. Kindred spirits we are, as I write your story, Manfred. My Dad, purveying what he thought were economic truths—such as “money is not made without presenting a service to others,” sounds truer than I once thought. His statement convinces me this evening. What are we, if not *Kindred Spirits*' Asher B. Durand and William Cullen Bryant on the ledge of a rock in 1849—both together in service of seeing a larger vision? When we cannot see anything from the view, we turn to paintings. And when we think to predict that ‘tomorrow is another day,’ we must not foretell what we have yet to write. And when all we might want is to be a single person, we turn to each other for help—kindred spirits, as they say. My Dad's aphorism, ‘to serve others is one's only value,’ rings, yet I can't ignore how working in your service produces my resentment. What were the first eighty years for, if not for the time and freedom I should have now? Time and freedom. These twin values now trade to listen to you. These golden years with their golden hours, time which should have tasted sweet, leaves me in hunger. I don't know if hunger keeps one alive or starves me until there is nothing.

As your question about what I see stained the silence between us, I forgot what reciprocity felt like. Your question searched for my matching answer. In my retirement, I forgot the importance I could present to people beyond myself. So even after years of cursing the heat, we only missed the sun on this soot-induced night. And only as kindred spirits, do I remember the power of my independence to not only speak for itself, but to respond to others.

— “I see nothing, Man.”

“Nothing is something.”

There will be a time, soon, when we can run again and let the breeze capture laughter away from others who try to hear what we say. But right now, all we have is the choice to sit beneath a bulging second-floor or prod the black horizon. Whatever the case, we stay indoors in the protection of a sunroom that hasn't seen the sun in years.

Archival Request Receipt

MilliAnne Winslow

PhD. Program Coordinator of Data and Library Science

Other Land College of Agrarian and Mining Enterprises

Fax: + 1 235 320 1500

May 16th, 1991

Lefty Westin,

Lefty Westin. I must say it again even after this letter's initial salutation. Lefty Westin. For a name so established in academic circles and ordained into near celebrity, it surprises me that you'll be inclined to request from our archive. Your telegram arrived hastily worded with the terse imperative, "Please send the following by week's end." While your phrase proves naïve to the meticulous nature of our administrative review, we proceeded to retrieve the following:

Albers, Linus. "Breaking News: First Rainfall in Thirteen

Years.” *The Anonymous, The Untitled Territory’s Oldest Standing Newspaper*, 17 Mar. 1989, p. E4, Final edition.

Cretin, Breston. “Boy Finds Unidentified Remnants in Dune Desert.” *The Anonymous, The Untitled Territory’s Oldest Standing Newspaper*, 18 Mar. 1989, p. M25, Final edition.

Untitled Territory. Center for Infectious Diseases. *Note for Material Particle Decontamination: Preparation for Fallen Matter Examination*. UTCID Executive Office, 18 March, 1989.

L’amore, Lee. “Provisional Speech to Public on Mar. 18th.” Received by Judith Ferrero, Clemente Greensparrow, Jay Hinterland, T.C. Neal, and Ursula Unger, 18 March 1989 at 0506 PST.

Horizon Municipality. Free Water Ways Federal Board Headquarters. *March 18th: Eye-Witness Account No. 146 – Unclassified*, p. 31-34. Horizon Municipal Registrar. ID No. NB1S5. Registrar File R-155. 16 May 1991.

Stateless Domain. International Water Ways Embassy. *Eye-Witness Account No. 105 – Declassified: Remarks on the Shadow of a Human Body*, P. 1-5. International

Water Ways Embassy Public Archive. ID No. BWT153. Registrar File 145D. 16 May 1991.

Terran, Quincy. "Oldest Jean Factory Falls Prey to Fire." *The Anonymous, The Untitled Territory's Oldest Standing Newspaper*, 18 Mar. 1989, p. B13, Final edition.

Netenmer, Veran. "A New Blast Near Las Palmas." *Horizon Rising*, 4 May 1989, p. C3, Final edition.

In a manila folder attached to this document, you will find a series of microfilms along with a burned blu-ray DVD. Since you are emeritus at Mainland College of Cosmological Mining at Horizon, the archivist at MCCM, my colleague Gwen Frentin, says she's more than willing to allow you the access to your campus' ST Imaging Microfilm Scanner, since it supports the 35mm scans I collected for you. You might be gratified or dismayed to know that you are one of a mere eight guests in the past decade who asked for clippings from the *Horizon Rising* and *The Anonymous*. Historians often prioritize our acclaimed Brownson Biological Collection of the West. The collection includes but is not limited to the fossilized remains of the smallest heifer bred west of the Horizon River, Little Bitty. Also, we boast of the formaldehyde-preserved Ocular Dexter (O.D.) of the Little Big Man, the region's original and seminal visionary. Lodged

in the special collections, we have the imitable horse-hair paint brush taken from the mane of the Black Stallion's ancestor and used by Albert Bierstadt to paint an American acclaimed masterpiece, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*. For the rare guest who comes to see relics or archival materials beyond those named in the prior listing, I make sure to mention these prioritized items, perchance it might fancy the interest of a fellow such as yourself.

While I believe in conviction that the Brownson Biological Collection of the West proves merited in its interstate acclaim, I am most humbled that you have taken an interest in the oft forgotten newsprint literature. Even in our college's PhD. program in Archival Preservation, we only devote a mere two-week module in student course work to the preservation of newspaper clippings. There is such a low demand at this point, the chair of the department classifies newspaper archival efforts as obsolete. Certainly, your request for these documents strikes me as prosaic for such a high-minded theoretician who the tri-state public acknowledges you to be. However, your request reaffirms my steadfast convictions. No matter the lack of long-standing significance that newspaper matter and other printed ephemera heralds, our stewardship of newspaper history impacts other people, including yourself. While I find my work valuable, I try my hardest to disregard the magnitude of my impact. If I give a dime to thinking about the wider world and the insignificance of any one of our lives, I might suffer

from a depressive spell as I think about the adjectives that could describe my contribution. ‘Menial,’ ‘insignificant,’ ‘trifling,’ ‘plain’—these are the adjectives that come to mind when I think about the influence of the archive’s actions. However, sometimes I remember that it is just these words that endear me most to my vocation: everyday life, captured on paper meant to decay.

I apologize in advance. I rarely author waxing and philosophical ramblings, especially in the preamble note responding to long-distance archival requests. Shred or burn this document once you receive the folder. I doubt a soliloquy will soften anyone on my tenure committee. I suspect all academics endeavored into this profession presume a career of ambitious intents and a bold embrace of ‘The Big Ideas.’ Now my plans are a lot less ambitious but quite a bit more compromised. Teetering between the prospects of climbing the ranks to claim the title of an Assistant Professor, I am aware the dour likelihood of an administrative role. I admit the latter seems more tenable at this point. While administration is a fallback, it is all but probable. In hindsight, it seems remarkable, if not dumbfounded, that I so easily allowed my dependency on this institution to make me smaller. Thinking about whether the budget will allow for another wholesale package of yellow highlighters or envying my colleague who wrote a splashy book review in one of the more prominent journals. Thinking about whether there’s enough color cartridge left

to tile a large entrance poster on the printer. Occupying most of my days managing what I once thought of as petty. Doesn't Socrates say that bigger minds think about ideas, while others think about people? If the partitioned tower of knowledge taught me anything, ideas are always about people. And the things that govern our lives are more trivial and inconvenient than sublime or profound. I wonder when I dwindled into the milieu of campus politics. I traded the initial propositions of searching for the big questions for the more provincial squabbles. When I realized that I too had become one of the anonymous amongst many, I admire what I once ignored.

The newspaper clippings enticed me, and my research began to cater towards the social histories proliferating the pages of *Horizon Rising* and *The Anonymous*. Forget Hegel when you have *The Herald*. What began as a life of the mind changed dramatically. I returned to the 'small stuff.' I first fawned over the archive's grandiose claims of preserving knowledge. Even in my confidences, I ask you to burn a piece of paper with the small and somewhat pitiable beliefs I hold. However, there's not much confidential value to be had in a pity-party litany. Intriguing that in being direct, I am so reluctant to exercise the one right I have: the ability to speak. I've relegated myself to twin competencies in scanning and reading, alone forgetting that I not only archive voices, but have a voice myself. Fretting over the cost of my words, I am afraid of my

own capacity to speak. I suppose we all forget how much we fear our freedom.

But I continue delivering a letter you didn't ask for, because I am excited: you're the first person in at least two years to ask for material beyond our staples. While I haven't met you, perhaps you are the perfect recipient for such a soliloquy. Isn't this institution supposed to expand the awareness of our history? To explore in the forgotten fragments? Yet alas. The archive is meant to preserve the quieter parts of our history. But to what avail? There are few people who inquire over a specific article. How rarely do our visitors recall an event that's any more unusual or curious than what we already know. While it is a crime to burn books, why pretend this archive's dusted stacks don't commit a more silent form of murder?

Alas, that is neither here nor there. Even as we have a diminished demand for newsprint ephemera, our library opted to supply microfilm versions rather than hardcopies to you today. Usually we offer hardcopies of articles, but your request concerns an ambiguous part of the tri-state history. While the event your request centers on remains open, the case has long been cold. Certainly, anyone aware of the unusual spree of events between the contested territories understands the event to be a rather disruptive episode. Even in this ambivalence and ambiguity, March 18th, 1989 deserves deeper investigative prodding.

Regardless of the incendiary nature of the event, there remains little effort to resolve what happened on the morning of March 18th. However, based on MCCM's piloted docuseries episode, there is ample belief that the unidentified object was a governmental sabotage directly from Horizon. Yet, such a hypothetical does not arise in any of the newspaper articles. The open case continues to stilt my wonder in pause as I puzzle over what emanated from the sky that day. While there have been other UFOs in the recent past, this event stains more pertinently, since I am one of the four-hundred-thousand tri-state residents destined to a shortened lifespan because of the preceding events. The UTCID claims that it is impossible to classify the air-borne particles that produced the influx of pneumoconiosis and other lung ailments over the past years. Yet, my Stage II lung cancer follows this recent development to a 'T.' I am sure that day the sun dripped in the red of its own blood and the sky shot in soot, our environment could do little to nurture and more to destroy.

On the freeway near campus, there's a billboard for the trial law firm, Higgenbottom, Sons and Co., specializing in the now burgeoning industry that captures and files citizens' plaintiffs' claim against governmental negligence. *Lung Failure, Disease or Cancer after March 1989? Call Higgenbottom, Sons and Co. at 1-800-235-3679.* All four lawyers, based on their phenotypic similarities, blue irises

adorned with pink under-eye circles, are likely the string of genealogical kin, represented all the way from Higgenbottom Sr. to his youngest son. They wear matching beaver fur Stetsons from the looks of those ten-gallon hats plastered on the oversized image. Why do they smile on that billboard? It beats me. It seems sickening to think of pervasive illness as an opportunity to capitalize on the ailing. Again, one's sickness is another one's prosperity.

1-800-235-3679. I haven't given the number a try, because I doubt that they can enlarge little people with little lives plagued with dire problems, into a situation significant enough to bring binational governments to their knees. Rarely does power apologize after the crime it commits. Besides, if reading all these newspapers tells me anything, it's likely that any international judiciary committee will revoke dues because I cannot claim, beyond a reasonable doubt, that my ailment comes from the fated events of March 18th. The longer I read the articles dating from the late nineteenth-century until now, I become more aware of the paradigms that play to repeat. Seated in this archive with its temperature-controlled purified refrigerated air system that costs more than I will likely make in my entire career, I only become more aware of how impossible it is to join history beyond the newsprint. I only have one chance to make the paper, too. I know that as a fact, like I know that the strawberry birth scar near my belly button won't heal. I don't know when the day will come, but exactly once I'll break the paper. They'll likely

write something in the eighth or ninth page of *The Anonymous*' 'Life' section. If I don't plan my death accordingly, they'll print it on a slower day, like a Tuesday and Wednesday, when people are too preoccupied doing real things to read about past events. I am not trying to be grim over events people find glum. It's an inevitable situation. I wonder who will pay the fifty-dollar fee for the obituary, or maybe the chair of the Library Sciences department will insist that each of my colleagues pitch in ten dollars to cover the announcement.

So, while I said it before and I'll say it again, it humbles me that you are taking interest in this recent event. Since the speculation surrounding this case proves so behemoth, we cannot offer any physical copies. Furthermore, the archive asks that you cut the clippings in half, lengthwise, once you've taken time to project the microfilm. Regardless of the remaining doubts surrounding this case, I also included additional photographs and ephemera that might prove useful in guiding whatever interests you enough to request the following sources. While we are meager in stature and compared to other regional archives, consider donating to the satellite organization we run on campus, Advocacy Clinic of Forgotten Documents, which I chair. We send a bi-monthly newsletter to all our Level One Donors. I will leave this notice at that. Fax us if any issues arise; the number is at the beginning of this letter.

MilliAnne Winslow
PhD. Program Coordinator of Data and Library Science
Other Land College of Agrarian and Mining Enterprises
June 11th, 1991

Letter of Consolation

Lefty Westin
105 Coffin Street
Untitled Territory, 78805
August 15th, 1991

Ms. MilliAnne Winslow of Other Land College of Agrarian
and Mining Enterprises' Archive,

I am sure that a note of grievance is hardly unusual for you now, although it is a letter about your death that has yet to happen. Since this note aims to encompass both gratitude and grief, it is no other than another one of those 'get well soon cards.' It would be foolish to assume this letter could present a novel form. I find that we resent but still seem to expect these notes of courtesy. The last time I received one was when I retired as emeritus. Rain or shine, people like to assume your sadness. I don't think any letters that I received had the hallmarks of literary merit. *I am sorry for your grief. My condolences. Wishing you well. Peace and love. My*

regards. Since you're the one afflicted with illness, I am sure that the occasion to read a letter like this presents itself in spades. Second to newspaper clippings, you're perhaps equally as versed in reading this self-conscious epistolary genre, which is perhaps not as dull as legal documents but surely not as sultry as the pulpy novels that delight our pleasures. However, I feel, out of perhaps courtesy or compliance, a need to ensure this letter finds you.

It would be a fool's dream to say, 'I hope this letter finds you well,' since this is not a generic email, but a letter meant for someone not entirely well at all. I'd say it's even glib of me to begin with a phrase as presumptive. So, I suppose this Florpink's Pharmacy store-bought 'get well soon' card does not service anyone in this situation. From the brief sentiments you've written, I assume it is improbable that you will ever 'get well soon.' However, to prove my thoughtful courtesy, I will score this letter in three lengthwise creases, scan and send it by fax. There are some tasks we do to acknowledge lives like our own. We are all spending lifetimes, and no matter the smallness of our existences, I feel the same fear. Yet, our fears feel unique. Even as we score the same lines and follow the crests already prefixed.

It is difficult to write a letter of condolence for a person I don't know well. However, I would like to apologize on the behalf of the press. There was plenty investigative negligence that left you adrift in a miasma of mismanaged events. I have

a ghost scar on my fibula from the time I broke my leg, and sometimes when something is off kilter, it starts to tickle, and no inquisitive scratching appeases the scar. On the morning of the first soot fall, I realized something was terribly ajar, since the scar's tingling made me itch, allowing me the chance to rub my index over the crests and falls of the pitted point. The scar itched uncontrollably as the brought about incongruent news.

However, since I was indoors that day, the events didn't immediately affect my respiratory system. Only when the onslaught of waves consumed my house two years later, did I realize the echoing extent that a single action produced. In writing a manuscript about the events of that day, I am wrapped like you in these events. I wonder if you and I are to feel a kinship of sorts, as fellow survivors, and witnesses. However, I suppose events that are this immense in scale are bound to cast broadly over those victims who the explosion impacts. It is my greatest regret that we might never arrive at a closure. I cannot imagine a conclusion profound enough to pinpoint what caused the disease you will die from, Ms. Winslow. And it makes me sick. However, rest assured, I will hope to contribute to the choir of truths by presenting another document explaining the events of March 18th. The document will likely be different than these newspaper sources you allowed me to borrow, since the book will come from the perspective of the person left undocumented in all these accounts: the pilot of the plane. The same plane that

crashed into the plant, causing such results that keep us reeling.

I would hope the manuscript I will present about March 18th might provide the opportunity for clarity we lack. Justice always seeks closure. However, the long arc to reach that justice makes the possibility of clarity uncertain. We are left starved of ends for far too many years, it seems. In these documents, it is evident that our collective failure—no matter how vast governmental capacities or institutional procedures seem to be—occurs when causes escape our identifiable knowledge. One of the fortifying buttresses of science is precisely that: to recognize that we know little, and to encourage us to search further. Therefore, in search of discovery, a great deal transcends and moves beyond reason and towards doubt. Doubt, in the circumstances I can piece together, seems to happen when we are not denied truth, but presented many truths.

Yet, even in trying to verify the past, we are left with an insurmountable present—with the results that point to our brokenness. We are only aware of parts of the whole, and we are wholly partial still. In no certitude, can we concur in facts with the soundness to close open cases and alleviate the endlessness of wonder. We might fall at this fact, but we fail to stop what we cannot override. Call it folly for the fools, but you and I are surely no different from other animals. If we cannot define our limits, we seek to defy the bounds that

bar us. So, I hope you keep fighting with the rest of your chutzpah. Maintaining the foolishness that keeps us spitting at the power. There's no recourse for actions that impact many of us. There is little sanctuary in the resources of others, and a love for that higher power often only betrays. Maybe this is less a condolence and more a reminder.

Yours,
Lefty Westin

*Breaking News:
First Rainfall in Thirteen Years*

Document No. 1 of 8— Other Land College of Agrarian and
Mining Enterprises Special Collections

The Anonymous
The Untitled Territory's Oldest Standing Newspaper
Linus Albers - March 17th, 1989

Defying every prediction stemming from local meteorologists and the cosmology department at Mainland College of Cosmological Mining at Horizon, today signifies the first rain in Untitled Territory in over thirteen years. Rejoicing over the unexpected downfall, community members celebrate the rain by taking the day off. According to the incoming data, over 32% of workers in the top five industries called in for a vacation day. Subsequently, several mills closed due to labor shortages. Irene Montana describes

the event as a work of divine design. Looking out from her porch adorned with a spired wrought-iron fence, her tears well, “My mother used to call rain something holier than us. I really do feel that now.” Montana fingers the beads on her plastic gem rosary. Her mother gave it to her shortly before her passing. Montana, now fifty-four, recalls the last time it rained, “My mother was still with us. It rained like it does today, with the smoke and soot. We find our beauty, even when making water from sand.” Montana scheduled plans to walk to the river with friends. They intend to see the rain hit the river’s water.

The rain, falling amid a high Southwestern wind of 73 g-kph, comes in droplets averaging 0.5 millimeter. With this compact size, meteorologists classify it as a drizzle. While moderate in its downpour, sedan models can hardly drive the roads in this condition. As one driver states “The rain falls in waves of silver and cuts the light.” This description explains why even a spare downpour proves enough to blind the driver controlling a modest motorized vehicle. Carl Riggs, M.D., local weatherman on K93’s morning program, describes this rainfall as unusual for two reasons. Beyond ending the longest drought in Untitled Territory’s near history, the rain falls as pelts and does not disintegrate. While I asked him if this meant the rain constituted hail, he denied such comparison. Riggs described, “Usually hail comes when thunderstorms carry raindrops up to frigid areas of the cloud layer 32 °F or less in temperature.” He notes that on days

when the temperature rises to its current level of 94 °F, hail rarely sustains its shape and melts quickly.

The downpour is not melting despite today's high temperature. He also notes the color of the substance, "Hail is often white in color. These droplets are charcoal in hue." Riggs cannot reconcile the material distinctiveness of the downpour. His only hypothesis is as such, "After thirteen years without rainfall in Untitled Territory, maybe the atmosphere changed enough to invite particles of an unidentifiable variant." Riggs concludes this proposition theoretically. He cannot expound further than the limits of government accredited research in Untitled Territory. Due to diplomatic sanctions between Horizon and Other Lands, Carl Riggs has not left this sovereign state in over two decades. He contends that prohibited interstate communication impacted Untitled Territory's once imminent place in the scientific community. "We used to be a beacon for a growing and illustrative community of scholars," he notes, "but now I can't access the newest scholarly findings from peers. There are too many firewalls—diplomatic and financial. I am left with more assumptions than answers and even more questions than assumptions."

Correction: Based on the findings from a meteorologist in Untitled Territory's Bureau of Human Rights, after scrutiny, the downpour is not rain. The report, while cataloged under intellectual property of the Bureau of Human Rights, insists

residences of Untitled Territory locate immediate shelter. A curfew of 8 PM, punishable by two weeks of imprisonment if broken, begins tonight. The republic mandates each employer to grant citizens three days of paid leave without layoffs. The government will issue stipends in the form of fiduciary bonds for any business that does not have the liquid assets to comply with this order.

*Boy Finds Unidentified Remnants in
Dune Desert*

Document No. 2 of 8— Other Land College of Agrarian and
Mining Enterprises Special Collections

The Anonymous
The Untitled Territory's Oldest Standing Newspaper
Breston Cretin - March 18th, 1989

A boy who insists on his anonymity reported an unclassifiable event earlier today to our main headquarters. Divulged minutes before we intended to print the day's paper, we decided to realign the margins of the paper to include a late, but timely, discovery.

The adolescent, walking across the Eastern Arroyo that separates Horizon from our Untitled Territory, saw a line of smoke. At first, he considered the fume to be a dust devil. Dust devils, officially called 'vortices,' are commonplace in

the region, especially after harvest. They often arise from surface air beneath the earth's crust. However, much like the darkened rainfall early morning three days ago, the rising fumes did not mirror the common dust devil, which often exemplifies a miniature tornado. Dust devils that form from the region's rounded quartz sand are usually fainter than the small furry the boy saw rising from the Arroyo. As he neared the provenance, he recognized that it was smoke, rather than dust, billowing from the site of impact. On the desert floor, the boy located the fire's smoke from a lone piece of mangled iron. According to the boy, white paint stippled the exterior of the iron in an incongruous pattern. He claimed the fire's twirl to be "seductive and slow, even kill." The iron piece, about ten feet in length, dented deeply, "clearly needed a lot of force to bend like that," the boy claims. A police detail surveyed the scene and reported the remnants as unidentifiable.

This is a developing story.