

A Tiny Miniature World Where the Proportions Are Slightly Off

Marina Burandt

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

University of Washington

2020

Committee:

Rebecca Brown

Ching-In Chen

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences

©Copyright 2020

Marina Burandt

University of Washington

Abstract

A Tiny Miniature World Where the Proportions Are Slightly Off

Marina Burandt

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Rebecca Brown

School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences

I continually saw visions of a massive, black-roofed carnival structure being destroyed in the middle of the ocean. It stood on thin, wooden posts encrusted in mussels, and was intertwined with slides and rollercoasters across its multiple stories. As I edged around the outside of it, I could see footage of the wreckage, a pleasant female voice describing the shoddy workmanship, the code violations, and the death toll. The uppermost level seemed abandoned for years, and it swayed perilously under my four gripping limbs. The entrance to the tallest slide gaped before me and I considered riding it to the bottom, but I could only hear the echoes of the lady newscaster grimly describing the carnage and my mom's disappointment in me for becoming involved. I instead leapt from the peak, watching the churning waves below begin to swallow the structure whole.

A Tiny Miniature World Where the Proportions Are Slightly Off

Marina Rose Burandt

Losing Tombola

Going to the beach before class where everything is in walking distance. A recent tragedy where a bunch of skiers had died underwater, with lots of memorials featuring big photos of the bacteria that overgrew them.

I stood before one of the many monuments laid out on the boardwalk. Rust, olive, pale sage, and emerald all reflected back off my face as I studied the macro details. The colors overlapped, butting against each other, greenish cups full of liquid between fuzzy yellow spores. The 10x10 images were massive, glossy testaments to the demise of seven skiers caught out of their depth and forgotten in the brine. “Pickled, then wilted, then overtaken by the liveliest bacteria colonies on record,” so said the shiny bronze plaque below the photo. They were lit with gallery light, from behind, amid stands selling teriyaki chicken in half a pineapple, necklaces made from twisted linen, decorative shells with delicate painted strokes, respectively. The beachgoers and I bumped into each other as I turned my attention from the memorials to the crab shack, all hung with dangling fairy lights. I could smell the plastic bags full of hot shrimp and red oil when I recalled class. I rounded on my foot and ran back through the crowds to the hilltop school.

Don't Make Me Leave a Bad Review

Eating a walnut cake with my dad in Washington and being candid for once. "Fuck these people for real, there's like nothing going on inside."
Crumbs fell from our mouths until the table was completely obscured.

I Paid Too Much for This Activity

A series of weird haunted house activities in a massive indoor/outdoor space. One of them is in an elevator with a mummified corpse hanging over us and it was definitely going to fall down on someone; lots of people around, don't know who.

Avoiding the Shrapnel

Driving by school just after a gas truck explosion— big orange helmets scattered— on the way to an island that you could get to by boat and then by offering a cat.

The cruise ship approached the shoreline. Under my arm I had a lobster cage tucked and sealed, a plump but small tabby cat resting inside. Wind whipped at the edges of my coat. The cat meowed. I could already hear the palm leaves rustling, branches heavy with bananas, pineapples, grapes, papayas, mangos, and thin, leggy stick bugs protecting them.

You're Not Alone in the Desert

I lived on a sandy wild boar preserve.

The sand was bright yellow and sparkled when the sun hit. Low-growing sagebrush grew amidst the dunes, offering small havens of shade to the resident lizards and insects. The boars were almost always invisible, lurking just out of sight in the corners of my eyes. But they were there, and they were enormous, incongruous with how silently they would creep about. I had a thickly insulated shack in the center of the preserve, spiked fence lining the perimeter, which only extended to about a half-acre. The windows were always sealed shut to keep out gusts of wind, mostly sand particles. Before going out each morning to inspect the grounds, I would suit up in a thin but hardy jumpsuit, goggles, and a band to keep my hair from my face. The sun beat down every day, no break for clouds or rain. How the plants and animals lived on so little, I couldn't know. By the end of my two-year stint taking over as keeper, I was nearly wild myself. Each owl cry in the night caused me to leap from bed, sweat flying from my body, eyes darting. The knife I kept tucked next to my cot was always in my hand before I was aware of it. It had been months since I had seen any boar, and I was growing increasingly disturbed that I had somehow misplaced them all, my only true task at this job.

Don't Hate, Participate

At a water park of sorts with a big outdoor slide, I'm trying to intimidate some young boy. I tell him I would kill him. He retorts that I would just get one of my grunts, Nathan, to do it and he wasn't scared of me.

You Millennials Don't Know a Thing About Avocado Farming

A feminine temperature for a pea soup at a bar with my parents. Someone steals my dad's wallet, but I catch him in time. My mom orders the avocado toast and it comes out full of heavy, round pits.

Knees Up, Ladies

Wading thigh-deep through powdery construction dirt, I wasn't as good of friends with everyone as I thought. Someone has very busy wedding plans, my cousin Loren there to assist and to complain about the décor. I hide everything I do from everybody else.

You're Telling Me

In a Brandy Melville-type store, very small and cramped with dim lighting.

I want to buy a top for \$5.80, the matching skirt for \$200. There is a gathering with drinks happening, but no one is talking and it is very awkward.

**Black Mold Came in and Settled in the Crevices Because We Live Next
to the Wetlands and the Songs of Frogs and Crickets are Nice to Hear**

My dad can't fit the window screen back in its place. The window is pentagonal-shaped, like a house.

Mind the Gap

A bald big dude is bunking with me and he has a curved hunting knife. He eventually apologized for me thinking he was going to stab me with it, which he said he only would have done if I pissed him off.

Tito's Bar & Grill

Christopher Walken dressed as his father character from *Hairspray* rolling on the ground of a restaurant bar and grill without a shirt, covered in tattoos and saying over and over, "I hope no one can see me!"

Well, We Can't All Be Doctors

I rescue tiny half dead baby raccoons from the gutter on the side of the road. After, I talk at a party with an old man of Asian royalty about how his son was disappointing him by marrying a white lady. Partygoers swished around us in jewel-toned ruffled gowns, all looking past me as I tried to meet their gaze.

Duty Free

Logan is asleep on a bullet train underground, I'm sitting somewhere else and he came wandering up, missing his train. I get him back on a new one and then went to a mile long, deserted jewelry store with rows of lit display cases and methodically turned them all off, darkness growing behind me as I walk perpetually into the light.

Save Yourself the Trouble

On the road from Seattle to Portland, longest drive thru McDonald's line ever, but the girls working were really trying to help me and Kirby in a separate car. The total added up to over \$100, and I began to cry in frustration as I just wanted to get to the beach.

Zwilling J.A. Henckels Gourmet Steak Knife, 5.5”

Driving with Nicolas, Kirby and my Dad in the car. We had stacks and stacks of dirty plates and bowls and I told Kirby to hold them on her lap so she'd remember to take them out when we got out. I was only holding a steak knife in the backseat with her and my Dad was driving. Two guys wouldn't get out of the crosswalk, one moved away and one got bumped slightly by the slow car and in passing I jabbed him in the upper arm with the knife. Seconds later, he's running after us and a bunch of cops are racing up the hill after us; we end up at a tiny flickering-light animal shelter and I hide in the deepest room with a small black kitten in my hands, heart pounding.

Forgettable and Plain

Had to play a round of hide and seek for work, found an attic full of clothes and hid in the piles, fell asleep and was forgotten.

The attic was incredibly clean, free of dust, cobwebs, and cardboard boxes. The clothes seemed to belong to a very opulent older woman, ranging from hefty tailored coats to intricately detailed ball gowns. Chests were lined underneath the hung clothes, containing pointy shoes, pearl jewelry, and silky, useless scarves. Several lights were strung about the small space, creating warm pools of light on the scrubbed wood floor. I carefully took some of the less nice-looking clothes and constructed a pile around myself, until nothing was left peeking out. Wrapped in soft and expensive fabrics, I must have drifted off. I awoke hours later and checked my phone, heartbroken to see no new messages.

Watergraafsmeer¹

Everyone gathered around a dead child in a bathtub with greenish spots of decaying flesh in Amsterdam, but then they woke up and got better.

¹ *“IN A LEAFY CEMETERY MUSEUM TOT ZOVER EXPLORES HOW HUMANS DEAL WITH DEATH. TRENDY BARS AND COFFEE SHOPS CLUSTER ON AND AROUND ...”*

Out'N>About Treehouse Treesort LLC

Climbing endless ladders and narrow stairways to get to the top floor encountering everyone's rooms unattended, unlocked, tiny pets as small as a fingernail, little cats and dogs and rabbits sitting in pools of sunlight streaming through porthole windows onto the knotted wood floor, eventually ascending to my empty room at the top.

Hyperhidrosis

A little girl was holding a hand drawn sign that said, "Chase Me!" in purple painted letters and was standing next to her mom and an idling black car; I slowly began to chase her, and they ran screaming playfully. After we stopped the mom thanked me and took me to dinner with their family which was having dinner right by my actual family, but I didn't make eye contact with them. I was at a huge outdoor fair space and Guy Fieri was walking around with me trying to convince me to have sex with him. I kept trying to politely defer him, but he wouldn't give up. "Don't you want tickets to the anime convention?" The line for the computer to get anime convention tickets was indeed very long. But I knew I didn't care about tickets, so I was finally able to break away from him. Post Malone with dyed black hair was standing in a group of guys who all looked vaguely like him with dyed black hair as well. Auntie Marti chased me through the fair after I commented that people aged 30-50 were probably too young for her now. She kept calling me Kelly and threatening me; I ran into a public bathroom and slammed a stall door behind me. I was drenched with sweat and hung my dripping scarf on the purse hook. "You better stay where you are, Kelly!" I heard the main door open and close, and I found a secondary door in the stall and ran through it.

Oil on the Water and the Sunscreen Smell

Drove the station wagon through a bunch of fences to get away from public pools.

I had had enough of swimming. The crowd grew as more and more people emerged from the sand below, all toting chairs and umbrellas until the noise was deafening. The pools were in a line of over a dozen, yet none had any space left. My car was trapped behind high chain link and low wooden fences, and as I grew more desperate to get away from the noise, I revved the engine and shot through them all. The bluffs of the desert were my only onlookers as I careened around hairpin turns, fence pieces dangling from the back of the wagon like “Just Married” accoutrements, clattering away.

Maple Baked Salmon and Roasted Garlic Potatoes

No one was happy with the food I made them.

Least Concern (Population Stable)

In a gondola zipping over a beach, little tiny bobcats peppering the cliffside, everyone in the gondolas remarking on how much smaller they are than they thought they'd be.

I Forgot My Oven Mitts

I got frustrated with Cabbage and threw him in a huge industrial oven and cranked the heat. Almost immediately I grew distressed and pulled him back out sobbing and apologizing and holding him to my chest.

Falsas Amigas

In a big Cape Cod house with Nicolas trying to cook dinner. The property was surrounded by a huge outdoor space with a near dead garden full of swollen white squash and pale garlic bulbs; there were sick people and sick cats in the hospital. Natalie was dating a girl named Lucy Rodriguez and was planning on getting her a divorce ring. They laughed uproariously. “This is really riveting stuff, but I have to go,” I said while backing away. I went into every bathroom, peering out the window of each one as the night got darker and darker. I got back to the kitchen with Nicolas and told him we needed to leave.

Citizen's Arrest

Grace on the floor cross-legged making portraits out of broken chunks of colored glass, Anna from work took all my books outside into the rain and they got wet. I turned the heater on and fluffed each one open to try drying it off. I was kicked out of the building shortly after.

He Came With His Bellybutton Lint Collection

Skippy the virgin is staying in my room. I had had a date with him in the past and was extremely grossed out that he was in my room and I told him to stay in the closet which had a twin bed in it and I went back for Erica's earrings that I borrowed and he was asleep in my actual bed and I was pissed. Went to a bonfire on campus with Nicolas, Emily, and Erica.

I Wanna Be a Cowboy, Baby

Going to some kind of sleepover event with Nicolas and a crowd, I couldn't decide what to wear and kept changing, a big black denim jacket and itchy pants made of brown cowhide that everyone agreed were cute but not comfortable enough to sleep in. Long process of packing and gathering everyone up, there were two tiny holes in the upper wall that looked out to the street that I needed to close. The parking lot was full and treacherous, had to avoid swerving cars. Carrie needed a ketchup packet but not for her, for her cousin's friend. I scoffed, "I'd give her my ketchup packet if it was for her, but honestly forget her and her cousin and her cousin's friend."

So Stubborn

Six dogs, one a basset hound, all curled up on my chest but too big to be there comfortably. A race to the bottom of the hill, we were trying to build an office chair from scratch and Nicolas wouldn't let me help.

A Case Too Simple For Freud

I was on a family vacation with Emily but then I was with the members of One Direction and I had a secret penis in a pouch of skin under my chin that I was very concerned about hiding from the boys.

NO – These Words Never Describe Whole Grains

I got six different tattoos in one sitting at the mall. I saw Mykaela with new longer hair in an amphitheater and talked to her while my parents kept trying to interrupt. She was going to school as a ruskologist which isn't real, but had something to do with grains.

Saboteur

I wanted to apply for a foster kitten job and my mom said okay and went with me to the interview and kept interrupting and making me look bad and it wasn't till after the interview and I had the job that she said the people were a racist cult. They were operating out of a very tall spiral building with lots of floors and cats everywhere.

Lover's Lane Broke Off Into the Sea

Tiny miniature world where the proportions were slightly off, camping backpacking and talking to people in the bathrooms at each stop.

Study Abroad 2k16

A bus tour with people from work and school. We tried to visit a church but a bunch of women in hijabs and sheer black tops were guarding the front and wouldn't let anyone in. We ended up in a big castle with gardens and libraries and took lots of zoom pictures of faraway kittens and Andrew left me five desperate voicemails trying to get me to go out with him and apologizing for trying to kiss me at the party. They played a sex ed tape in a classroom, abstinence only. A big grocery store trying to meet with people, driving in a parking lot and beating some girls to a spot.

Alphie's Finest Gin

Working for a restaurant and needed to do something with cookies that made most of the staff leave, Aidy Bryant was one that stayed, we all cleaned up the horrible mess the weaker staff abandoned, I found a huge bottle in a drain of blue alcohol with a bee on the label that said it was flavored prosecco.

Shifting Platforms

Some kind of program you sign up for and can't undo, a man who lost his eye with a little machine, a white bag head monster or ghost thing keeps popping up. I was living with Anna in a dorm room with 11 "puppies" that were definitely little cats and one peed on and ruined her laptop. A museum where they take all your stuff.

Nutrient-Rich Ecosystem

Kidnapped in the desert and brought to someone's enormous house with fast growing plants outside. They had so many cats and dogs and pets that I couldn't keep track, and a pool outside. It was just some kind of holiday in their country and people's dogs had gotten out during the festivities. Someone tied several dogs to the pool railing. I dropped Baroque chairs I found onto the ground below until I had a sturdy pile to scale down. I untied all the dogs and ran into the sprawling desert, some chasing after me.

Never Trust a Goblin in the Gorge

Everyone was upset with me for allowing the bluish-green goblin to fall in love with me. I insisted that I was only trying to be nice and never led him on. He ran away from our campsite the moment after he had me gripped in a tight embrace, and I stood there for a long time afterward, just thinking.

Dire Straits

Carolyn had me kidnapped and sent to Kentucky in a boxcar and I arrived at a big carnival and she was wearing a black leotard and tailcoat and told me that we were married now, and my parents were okay with it.

Last Call for Boarding

Very long lines at Heathrow airport inside and outside and I took my Advil
PM too early and was falling asleep standing up.

L'affare Gigante

Serious-looking businessmen speaking Italian at a regular-sized restaurant run by giants. Their specialty beverage was giant lemonade served in a seven-foot tall glass and a straw long enough to reach the patron at their table. I was watching it all like a movie.

Cabin Fever

I was in Cambria and still had to go to work from 6-4. I shared a bed with Natalie and Emily and a movie was playing in our cabin where a veterinarian was going to euthanize a sick girl.

Persimmon Cove Flora and Fauna

Got drunk in an enormous log cabin with a bunch of long-term homeschoolers. Reminiscid about school, about being cooler now.

The Rubies of My Heart

I was left in charge of the pool with only a long-handled net in my hand. I stepped closer to the edge of the water, not seeing any swimmers. As I knelt down, I saw dozens of vibrantly red human fetuses paddling around like tadpoles.

Gilt-Head Bream

I had to go diving into the lake to find the inside of a giant sunken fish, all dead fish spiraling slowly inside with two other girls to help me. I left after the mission was done and got into a truck with my dad and brother. The truck bed was laden with white buckets full of cut fiddlehead ferns and dusty miller.

**This Glass Figurine Wolf With Ham in the Paw is a Perfect Choice to
Fill Up Your Blown Glass Figurines Collection**

Trying to gather glass figurines, some magnetic, from a huge, dimly lit gallery. Most were Disney characters; others were miniaturized friends and family members.

Parallel Worlds Where You Can See Ghosts

I was in Italy. It was raining and muddy everywhere and each photo I took would appear on my phone screen as a completely different place. I was playing with a yo-yo and a top with a shopkeeper and I told him, “Giochiamo con i miei, come se dice, toys!”

Medicine Man

Take a boat through the mangrove forest to find the mushrooms that heal this particular ailment. “I can’t believe you’d have an argument over such material possessions.”

**Our Inpatient Facility is Nestled on Four Acres in the Famous Laurel
Canyon in West Hollywood**

I was tricked into going to rehab; the facility was designed for children with a medieval castle theme, little curly flags and turrets lining the halls.

I Don't Think This Is For Us

Stayed at a resort with my parents, Max, Tom, and Stacy. Underground ocean-themed ride with a wild cat and her little kittens at the beginning. Treacherous pool ladders everywhere to get around. I didn't want to stay in some child's room overnight that they were renting out. The lights never turned off at night so I watched the shifting shadows on the wall.

Unadulterated Loathing

Filling out tax forms for Idyllwild again, sitting at a long picnic table but I have to sit next to Emma with dyed brown hair and instead of being civil I flipped her off within a minute. My dad asked about the taxes and called it another blunt delivery.

Keep One Foot in Front of the Other

Apocalypse, end of the world coming, staying in a coastal house with my parents and a bunch of other people deciding whether it was best to push out deeper into the ocean or go home and spend time with family. I kept going around and stockpiling money because I was going to make a break for it. I also had a calendar that was my keepsake and hoping it would actually come true. Arik changed my phone background to his picture, which I only saw when someone video called in while having an orgy in the living room.

Irises and Crocuses

Dad passed away while on vacation, hosting a lot of extended family. Eric and I talked about taking the 100-dollar bill someone left as a thank you; he decided not to.

Fair Enough

Natalie's dad threw out a bunch of my drawings and told me to get my dirty anime ladies out of his house.

Magnolia Blossoms Fell From the Branches into the Water Below

Traveling (trembling) through gated communities and strawberry fields
with Crystal from study abroad, swimming in warm lazy rivers.

Beast by Land and Sea

I was in a boat in a coastal town on stilts in a heavy fog. There was a boy who could shapeshift on the boat, and I kept begging him to turn into the fish man from that old monster movie.

Stuttering Quick and Then You Fall

Wedding photography, high altitude, long comic book, long dark tunnel crawl, I was engaged, climbing up a rope lasso with Sal to take a picture at the high altitude, but the rope wasn't connected to anything.

Vibrating Almost Too Quick to See

I did dishes forever, waiting for the official nominators to tell me who the nominees were. Someone knocked on the door aggressively, shaking the hinges. I looked through the peephole by jumping up and putting my hands on the top of the doorframe. A short fat man stood outside, his eyes darting around. I started to open the door, calling my dad for help. The door began to open so forcefully that I got scared and leaned my whole body on it, trying to turn the lock with shaking fingers.

Bad Bitch

My dad took me past a shelter full of ugly and misshapen animals up for adoption. The path through the cages led to a courtyard in front of a library, beautifully landscaped and decorated with stone benches and archways. They had taken all the most adorable animals from the shelter, so I walked around slowly, kneeling to look at tiny baby bunnies and cats hiding in shrubbery and flowerbeds. I decided to catch up with my dad and head into the library, past a gorgeous pond full of blooming lilies. An enormous snapping turtle lunged out of the water, breaching, splashing everyone nearby with pond mud. I ran inside and made a beeline to the front desk. Two tall modelesque girls were already standing there and complaining, their shorts and tops splattered with mud. “We’re all wearing white and it’s ridiculous that you have this thing out there splashing us with mud.” The girl working the desk turned to me and said, “You may not remember me but you were so mean to me in high school, so I figured I’d tell you that wasn’t cool.” Her face was red, and her hands were twitching. I looked down at my clothes and responded with as much acid as I could. “Actually, I moved here from California last year so that wasn’t me. Get rid of the fucking snapping turtle.” I turned on my heel and went to find my dad.

Shaking At You Not With You

There was an ant farm mall. I was with my mom, Grandma Dianne, and a toddler boy. We visited a cupcake shop and a clothing store, the toddler growing larger and larger with each stop. He had a segmented wooden dolphin in his hands that he would violently shake at anyone who asked him a question. By the fourth stop, he looked like a young Logan. We stopped in an art gallery and found my cousins from Pennsylvania inside. They took us outside to an enormous launchpad that required no safety gear or housing vehicle – all you needed to do was stand on it and it would spring you away to Houston. “We’re expanding to other areas soon,” claimed their large signboard.

Soak City Is No Longer Accepting New Visitors

Inside a dank, abandoned water park with mildew and greywater dripping from the walls. I am trying to find my way to the art museum to locate a missing necklace. The gift shop at the entrance is dimly lit, and I creep through it until I find a back room shielded by drapey velvet curtains. On three-tiered display trees are small piles of various smartphones, all dinging and vibrating with incoming messages. I walk further in and stumble upon a circle of people wearing burgundy robes and hoods, chanting slowly. I begin to back away, and they all turn to pelt me with thick gold coins.

My Frogs!

Many rows of wooden rickshaws all full of loosely taped cardboard boxes.

Upon closer inspection, every box was full of frogs, headed to a laboratory.

Cuttlefish or Nautilus

A big hotel at sunset with a Starbucks attached. Several people gathered outside, all discussing a baby on the ground and trying to decide who it belonged to. I went into the hotel and found a secret exit to a library in a swamp, the shelves held up with sticks and poles to keep them dry. Two heads sat in jars on a shelf, one with tentacles, and I watched out of sight as they argued who was further evolved.

Carrara Marble with Gilt Bronze

We walked around the grounds of an enormous mansion, all constructed of white stone and marble. There were 400 white pillars and multiple hundred-step staircases deterring visitors from peeking into the windows too easily. I was fuming at how much space they had cleared to build the monstrous, massive house. We were staying at a camp that only had one large bathroom. I smiled at everyone I knew that walked in, mostly guys.

Glass Bones and Paper Skin

I really liked the energy of these two guys who lived in a house together. It was a constant house party, bustling and lively but never getting out of control. I kept getting more and more injured, bumping into walls and corners and falling off of low precipices. By nighttime I could barely move, but it was my job to watch someone's young child at the party and keep them out of trouble. I was much too drunk and damaged to handle this task.

You're Being a Real Nuisance

In the dusty hills. I'm trying to gather all my things and move from a communal home to a place of my own. Each room is sparsely decorated with packed dirt floors at ground level. One suitcase is full of nothing but papers. Tiny white polar bear cubs with long, pointed snouts wander around inside and out, but are protected by larger, more vicious creatures. Everyone keeps asking when I will be ready to leave, and I tell them that it's distracting and to please stop asking. Looking outside the window of my room, I see two massive wildcats, white with tan heads, a mother and her grown son, out looking for prey.

Did You Sign the Waiver?

I was on vacation with all my extended family, touring Europe with Nicolas. We were staying in a huge glass dome filled with unearthly large oak trees, roots creating tunnels and archways. Things were going well until I was talking with one uncle, his face bubbling and shifting, about how everyone disliked Nicolas and they were going to do something about it. I rounded the corner of the large central tree to see Nicolas being held down and tortured by other family members. I started to kick and scream and push them away from him. He had to go to the infirmary. No one would apologize or even admit what they did, so I refused to say a kind word to anyone. We arrived in Prague, and while I found it beautiful, my mom was still refusing to admit that anything bad had happened and was becoming petulant with the fact that I wasn't properly enjoying myself. Our activity for the day was solo parasailing; I flew over the city, looking down at the streets moving with cars and pedestrians. Upon our return, we found that our touring vessel had been decorated with thousands of gorgeous plants and flowers while we were gone. I tried to enjoy my new room, which was miles-high, lush with greenery and tropical flowers, but all I wanted was to get revenge on my family and take Nicolas and myself away. Sleek black panthers stalked through the upper levels of my room, occasionally shaking a leaf or petal loose to flutter to my feet.

Shocks Need Replacing

Cory and I had won awards from our high school and were given the opportunity to tour the country by bus and give talks to students. Cory's mom saw him off as we were boarding, handing us two hefty wheels of cheese. "Double-Gloucester. For the road," she said as she waved us off. We first visited an underground research lab, aquariums and tanks fixed internally in the walls, all labeled and lit with different colored lights. A researcher demonstrated their studies on a fat frog, poking it with a syringe, which made it sprout fins and gills.

Auditioning

A long and scenic drive with Nicolas to Italy through rich green hills and tan cliffs. We visited all these spots I remembered as a kid with Logan, driving up and down mountains to visit different houses. Two sisters joined us, our friends, and they were dead. One was very dramatic. There was a rash of monster-related crime going on, and we chased around solving mysteries for a while. We watched our whole day back in snapshots and photos, like we had been followed around by a camera crew. A new episode was beginning, and we were headed to New Orleans so the dramatic dead sister could have sex with another monster in order to stop a dangerous event from taking place.

Whiskey Sours and Bloody Marys

I got incredibly drunk with Nicolas at Aunt Paulette's house. We had to try and sleep it off because we had taken two separate cars. I went to use the bathroom and Aunt Paulette and Cody walked in on me. I was trying to take surreptitious photos of the bathroom and the kitchen. I was mad at Nicolas, but couldn't remember why.

Deserted Internship

I was at the center of a long picnic bench for a series of interviews. I nearly forgot to take out my retainer before I started talking, so I quickly tossed it into my bag by my feet. There were lots of people milling around, pretending to do other things but clearly watching and listening in on my interview. A sandstorm was beginning to kick up, but we soldiered on.

Home For the Holidays

Trying to hide all my stuff around a big empty house. A photo shoot where I was supposed to stand on a very tall chair in the dark; nobody told me it was over, so I was up there a long time.

b

Dream On

A Tiny Miniature World Where the Proportions Are Slightly Off is a listed collection of titled dreams I have had and recorded in the past several years. It has been a circuitous, arduous journey to complete my thesis. At the end, I feel I am able to hold in my hands a genuine piece of my soul and my spirit. My dreams have been incredibly important to me for many years, and to be able to see so many important, prescient moments in one document is exhilarating and beyond meaning for me. *A Tiny Miniature World Where the Proportions Are Slightly Off* is an assemblage of dreams; dreams experienced first by my sleeping self, then by my waking self in the act of recording. Even between these two steps, unmeasurable dream material is lost, forgotten by the waking mind, and swept away. This in itself is a form of erasure, leaving behind only the most strange or harrowing images from the dream for the waking self to mull over. The transference of dream material from subconscious to conscious to written to polished resulted in numerous metamorphoses. Each dream underwent erasure, additions, shifts, and titling. I wanted to deploy these concepts originally by “hyperlinking” the most interesting part of the dream through underlining and changing the text color to blue. The dream was then expanded below, with different juxtapositions tested to see if the dream material would be impactful expanded into a footnote, or an appendix. This concept was eventually simplified, evidenced in several dreams which possess two paragraphs with a different viewpoint or more enhanced, macro detail of the dream.

The dreams went untitled for many months, seeming a bit too detached, floating in space from the dreams that came before, without much clear demarcation of space and time, or beginning or end. While this appeared to lend more dreamlike qualities, the pieces didn't have enough context individually to stand out from the rest of the list. The act of titling each dream was a breakthrough, and allowed for a touch of humor and additional context for the dreams to follow. The titles and the dreams themselves vary in length, and this is true from the initial recording to the final product; some dreams are only a remaining image, unfaded. Others maintained intense detail even after waking. Every piece of dialogue within quotations is exactly as I remember it, and nothing was invented. While some aspects of each dream may have been altered or fictionalized, the most interesting aspect of this project is the mysterious tension between the fictional and nonfictional. I often felt while writing my thesis that I was somehow infringing on copyrighted material, describing events that didn't belong to me. Yet, these experiences are wholeheartedly mine, created in the strange furnace of my mind that devises dreams from the amalgam of my entire life.

Each dream is an approximation of my subconscious, sleeping self experiencing the dream firsthand, some with extensions, expanding upon a pregnant moment in the dream and pushing on it, a sort of polar opposite of erasure. This allowed me to step back inside the dreamscape while awake, peering into corners I may not have noticed while asleep. Dreamscape, in my own definition, refers to the atmospheric, physical, and emotional landscape

of the dream. This could be in any point on the scale between maximalism and sparseness, and can only exist in its fullest capacity in the subconscious, dreaming mind. Any writing depicting a dreamscape is a replication, the emotional and atmospheric qualities of which are harder to express. These peerings resulted in a harmony between title, dream, and in cases where the dream is expanded, expansion. Each gives a slightly different form and level of information to the reader, which became extremely important while discussing the implications of my thesis with my advisor, Rebecca Brown. A reader picking up my manuscript without any explanation will likely have a very different experience than someone picking it up after knowing my own thoughts about it. This is intentional and welcomed on my part; having already experienced the dreams once, and then again as many times as they were recorded and rewritten, I cannot possibly walk fresh into these spaces. To see a reader experiencing my dreams for the first time allows me a rare glimpse at the dreamscapes and dream material from the outside, finally stepping out of my own perspective. Reading aloud to a group (when it was still permitted, alas) without any preamble allowed me to glimpse what a reader might think of my work unintroduced. The pieces are real but unreal, truthful but fictional, visceral but impossible, humorous but devastating. I hope that my project captures just some of the swirling, tangential, impossible-to-describe sensation of having a dream. It's a feeling I look forward to every night and revel in every morning.

I have been recording my dreams since I was a young teenager. As a homeschooler, I had the perfect set-up to sleep long hours and had nowhere to go. I allowed myself long, languid mornings consisting of lying in bed thinking about my dreams. Across the ages, I tried keeping several different dream journals, some small with no lines, meant for adding illustrations alongside them, some spiral-bound and academic. At one point I had a technologically advanced alarm clock with an included headband (won from one of my mom's various sweepstakes entries) which was meant to be strapped to the user's forehead before going to sleep. A sensor in the headband monitored some kind of waves emanating from my head, telling me the next morning in a line graph where and when I had been asleep, and how deeply. Unfortunately for me, this was much too early in my research period to get hard results from this act of sleeping data collection, which I largely failed at, given that I was a very active sleeper. An hour or two would be documented, showing my steep decline into slumber, and then would disappear at the same time that I'd knock the headband to the floor.

Once I began high school, leaving my beautiful routine behind, I got out of practice of remembering my dreams actively. They began to stagnate, taking form of daily anxieties rather than slightly strange or fully fantastical scenarios. In some, I would walk about endlessly in an ill-designed department store seeking something specific that I just couldn't find. In another, I tried putting a basketball on an angled shelf with no success for what seemed like a thousand times, only to have the ball hit the floor again

and again. I continued to neglect my dreams, lamenting the uninteresting content, and the seeming death of my subconscious creativity.

If dreams were, at worst, nothing more than an extension and manifestation of the brain's anxieties and leftover troubles of the day, I didn't care to examine them so carefully. Still, I endeavored to track my dreams long after I tossed out the fancy alarm clock, both on paper and in my technological devices. What finally stuck was the Notes app in my iPhone. It was easily accessible, and allowed me to see all my dreams in one long document, which can be evidenced in how I decided to frame my final product. I copied this archive, which had root dreams from 2016 and continued to the current day, and began to work toward a final product from it. The dream material was written sleepily and urgently, in an attempt to remember everything about the dream before it slipped away. I began the process of trimming excess material written too hastily, and continued to add new dreams as I would dream them.

The presence of the dreams and written dream material was undeniable – I had a long list of archived dreams that required my attention, a simulation of my past mornings, and again I was able to gently unearth peculiarities and patterns in the dream material. It was difficult not to apply too much meaning to the symbols in the dreams, to the now evident patterns of watery, dark atmospheres and of being underground, of being forgotten. The months leading up to the final determination of what the thesis would be were fraught. I knew I wanted to work with dreams, and had roughly imagined a kind of parallel travelogue and dream journal where I could go on small

road trips, document my travels, and consequently document the dreams I had while on the go. The economic factors of this idea were what eventually resulted in its demise as I tried calculating even the cheapest option of campsite, which I planned to use only as a parking space for me to sleep in the back of my car.

I eventually scrapped the notion; beyond the financials, I felt that the concept left the dreams extremely reliant on my body's physical location, which wasn't my goal for the piece at all. With the continued and beyond appreciated support of Nicolas Hauser, I was able to land on a potential idea which was based on work I had done previously toward a graphic novel. The graphic novel was distinctly about two fictional characters, one of whom was dreaming in a coma, the other a character in the dream. This was the basis for my adaptation, which I presented at the Salon using primarily images to drive the tension of the story; this was clearly an idea too removed from myself, the self I had been seeking to get closer to through the process of a graduate-level creative writing program. It leaned on images, and while I may return to the idea in the future as a graphic novel, the dreams' images could never be fully recaptured through writing. The dream material itself could be the star, and that is exactly what my thesis became. The dreams stand alone, titled with no further identifiers such as date, time, or location involved. The reader must approach the material as they are, and whether they find meaning in the work is up to them. During this Salon, *Bruja* by Wendy Ortiz was recommended to me by Ching-In Chen, and proved to be invaluable to me. Ortiz's version of

a dream autobiography, in her coined term a *dreamoir*, provided a jumping off point as I considered my own dreams and how they intertwined with autobiography and memoir. Her dreams are described simply, and realistically, to the point where the reader may not know exactly that the content is made of dreams and not reality; my own work approaches this concept, but also engages with the bizarre and impossible to the point where the work would not be confused for nonfiction.

In the process of writing and researching, I began to seriously think about the dreaming self and waking self and how the separation between the two could never be reconciled. The waking self can only catch glimpses of dreams shortly after the dream has ended; once awake, the selves are rent in two. The dreaming self is practically unaware entirely of the waking self, yet with inescapable reminders that the two selves are inextricably connected in other, less obvious ways. Material from the previous day can cause spillover into the content of dreams, yet for me these spillovers are usually not that obvious and can come from any point in my life and not just the day before. Ted Hiebert brought the research of Ernest Hartmann to my attention; Hartmann has done extensive, fascinating work on the subject of dreams and has stated that “dreaming is hyperconnective. At the dreaming end of the continuum connections are made more easily than in waking, and connections are made more broadly and loosely. Dreaming avoids tightly structured, overlearned material” (Hartmann 1). This suggests a probable explanation as

to why dreams can often seem to be predictive, especially when viewed again while awake.

At the crest of 2020, I was overwrought with external stress. My thesis was the least of my concerns, and was in fact an escape from life to delve back into a wonderfully strange world of dreams. Long drive-through lines, isolation, social distance, and interrupted travel, bizarrely entangled in dreams and their own form of unreality, all became harsh realities with the onset of COVID-19. Re-reading my dreams took on a new dimension, and I felt like a medieval dreamer given a sign of the future; a sign which I clearly didn't recognize in time. What my thesis became was a cathartic list of my own anxieties, the very issue I flinched from but what I realized needed to be approached head-on. Through recording, reflecting, labeling, reconsidering, and reordering the multitude of dreams, I became closer than ever with myself, my memories, and got a strangely prescient view of the year I was about to undertake.

As I have since begun the denouement of writing a thesis and thinking about my dreams in the context of being done with this chapter of analysis, I have been thinking very deeply about dreamscapes from my past. An enormous collegiate library with half-empty reading tables; fields of tilled wheat in tightly tied bushels; the frontmost part of a plane with the windshield missing. I am able to stand in them, the scene emptied of actors, so that I can look at the space without distraction. I gaze around at the infinitude of my own mind, and I am excited to dream again.

Thank you:

Mom and Dad

Nicolas

& everyone in my dreams