

This is EL14.

“And so I stood on the boundaries of life, on the peripheries of existence, and peered outwards unto death and unto every True Thing, every thing that I would feel from then on until eternity, and it was a very Dark Ocean - a very deep, and very empty universe.”

Robert Voor.





GILES COREY.

by DANIEL BARRETT.

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INTRODUCTION

Sometime in the Spring of 2009 I tried to kill myself. Six months before that, I used a Voor's Head Device for the first time.

I sat in front of a piano, and slid the hood over my face. Immediately, I felt the room contract. After that, only flashes. Half-memories.

The tape recorder on the table clicked to a stop an hour later. I was on the floor, the hood next to me, crumpled into a heap. Featureless. I couldn't remember how I'd come to be there.

It was several days before I could bring myself to listen to the recording. When I did, I noticed things - footsteps while I played. The sound of glasses clinking together. Knocks on the wooden body of the piano. And myself: wailing, screaming, crying. For an hour, until the end of the tape brought it to a sudden stop. No explanation.

Several months later, I found myself in the kitchen, a knife to my chest. Wailing, screaming, and crying. I didn't remember how I came to be there, how I came to be standing where I was standing, holding what I was holding. It was like a veil had been lowered, and then lifted. I threw the knife and it stuck, quivering, in the wall. There it stayed until I had the courage to touch it again, weeks later.

The months in between the two events had been lost, utterly lost, to a wave of depression that nearly destroyed me. Week upon week buried in books, hidden in texts. I had already decided that my life was not worth living, and so the depression manifested itself as a question:

Seance



If I did not wish to be alive, did I wish to be dead?

I read anything, and everything, I could find - on the afterlife, on suicide, on physical evidences of ghostly existence.

I am searching, I told myself. Searching for reasons to live. Searching for ways to defend my continued existence. Searching for a reason.

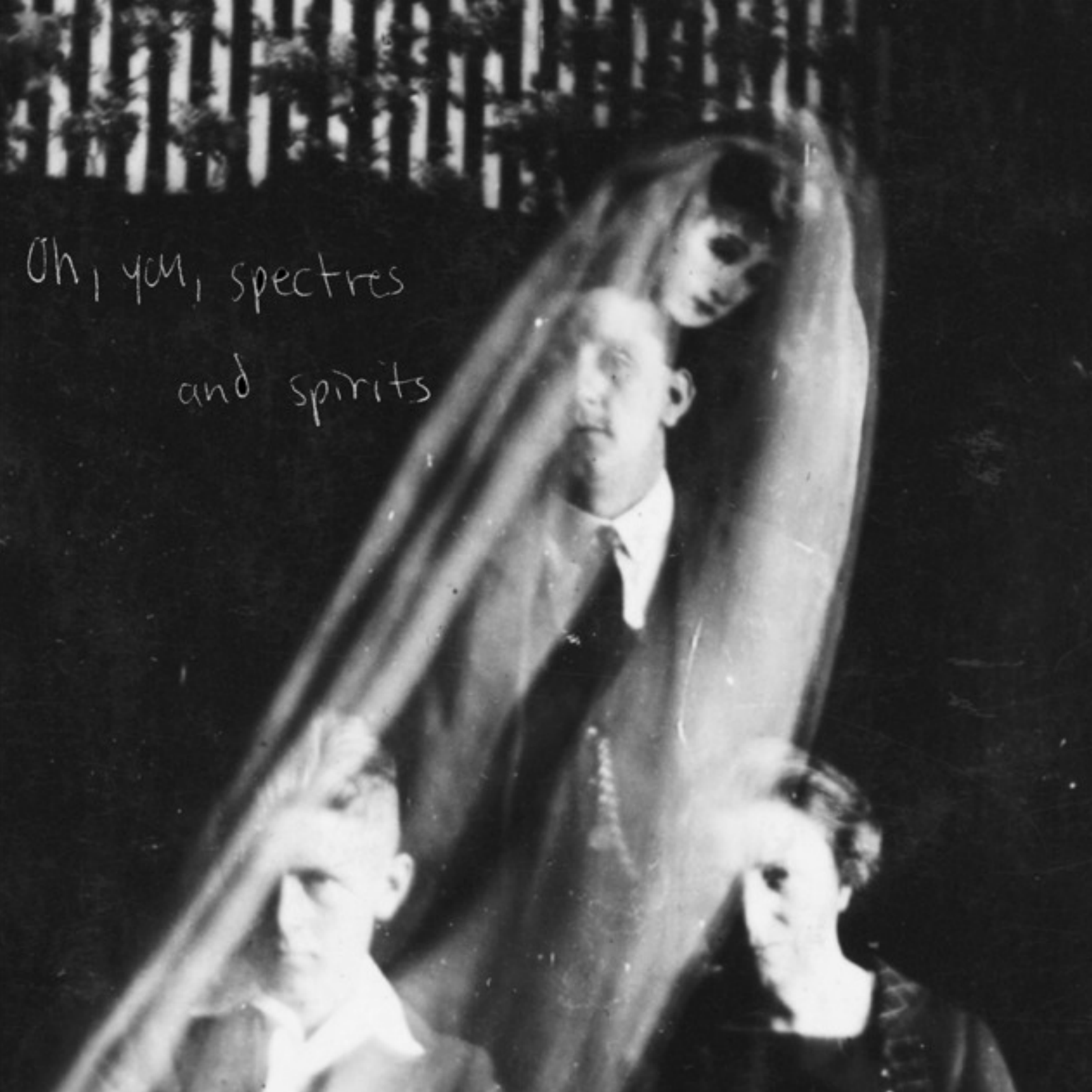
But I was lying, even then. I had already decided.

Rehearsing. Retreating.

The search for death brought me to many strange places. I learned many strange things. This book is a record of those things. These songs are a record of those things.

My life is a record of those things.

Oh, you, spectres
and spirits



THE HAUNTING PRESENCE

*Giles Corey, bloody, gory,
we will redress your wrongs
bloody, battered,
nothing matters,
somehow, just makes it worse*

*and I don't care if I live or die,
because I ain't ever going to no other side,
there ain't no heaven and there ain't no hell,
but I am a sinner so it's just as well*

*there's a devil on my back
there's a devil on my legs,
there's a devil on my chest
there's a devil on my neck*

*and of a wicked physick came
all the heavy stones
to fall with crushing weight upon
all of those who can't become a ghost*

*I've been wailing like a child at the bottom of a
well
I've been pacing like a man in a prison cell
I am buried above the ground
and no one knows anything*

is this real

VILLAGE OF 100 WITCHES

I want to talk about the Voor's Head Device, but to talk about the Voor's Head Device, I need to talk about Robert Voor. And to talk about Robert Voor, I need to talk about Dogtown. I need to start at the beginning.

There were two Dogtowns - one in Massachusetts, in the 1700's, and one in New York, in the late 1990's. They are very different. They are also the same.

The first Dogtown was a small settlement on the coast, right in the middle of what is Worcester today, but wasn't much of anything then. It was little more than a small circling of houses and a church. Dogtown sat on the town's edges. It was where the undesirables went. This mostly meant unmarried women, the elderly, and some Blacks.

People went to Dogtown because the land on the rocky outcropping didn't produce anything. No one wanted it, and thus no one complained when one more shack went up. All their homes were old before they were even built, little more than cellars carved into the soil. Holes in the ground.

That's similarity number one.

Voor's connection to all this is up for debate, but it's a connection he believed in, and so for our purposes we can pretend it is fact, even if we really think otherwise.



I have a prayer and
I need you

He believed that Judy Rhine was his great-great-grandmother, or, as he put it, "as many greats as it takes." She was a prostitute, a gatherer of herbs, owned nothing and bothered no one. She had a reputation, as did many of those who lived in Dogtown, which was known as "The Village of 100 Witches." It's doubtful there was ever 100 people living there, but Witches? Possibly.

There is a story about how Dogtown got its name, and it's a story that has stayed with me. The story says: These women kept dogs, lots of them, and when one of the women would die the dogs would starve, and would come streaming down the hill into town, looking for food. Every time you saw a pack of dogs in the street, you knew someone had died. Like mockingbirds going silent at your window.

Judy lived with a black man, which was probably enough to have her hanged even without her witchcraft. They said she performed hexes for money. More likely, she traded bodily fluids, which, after all, is the sum total of most human relationships. She controlled life itself, in its rawest, most honest form. That is as much witchcraft as anything can be.

The man was creatively named Black Neil. Black Neil was a hog slaughterer, a job for the untouchable caste America isn't supposed to have. He came home to Judy every day covered in blood; he washed it off in the stream behind their house. He would sleep in the cellar. I like to imagine that he never slept with her;



to hear it

that they'd both just had enough. Why make more, they'd say, when there's too damn many of them already.

But Voor points to this house, with the killer in the basement, and the witch in the bed, as his birthplace. "Inside these four walls," he writes, "from these empty places did I come, born as a true soul, born as a true man, the idea of myself *becoming* something, when it was nothing, but could become something."

In any case, it's impossible to know, because neither left anything behind. Neither were the kind to erect monuments. No mementos. No diaries. They were better than that. They lived their lives and then had the decency to disappear forever. Not like Voor. He built monuments out of other people. Made them into memories and never had his own.

In the winter of some year or other, Judy Rhine died. Some say she hanged herself. Voor said she was raped. People hate what they create, almost as much as they hate what they are, he said. That's true.

They found Black Neil in the cellar, cowering under a potato sack; and this is one of the reasons I believe that they were never lovers, not even really friends, just beings who recognized in each other an infinitely deep and yearning something. If they slept within a few feet of each other, if they saw each other and only each other, they could be sure of never needing to explain. They'd never ask you if slaughtering hogs and casting hexes were acceptable. No one



allow me to lay
down my scal

would come up to you and ask you why everything was always so awful. No one would wonder why you were always in bed and no one would ask you to straighten the fuck up and get on with it. And you never would.

Once, Judy Rhine wrote down a spell, her only surviving artifact. "Perform these deeds," it said, "and you shall knowe a great and powerful spirit." It said -

*Cut the door along its frame
Mar the flesh along its gates
a bloodied bath to loose the tongue
a heightened sense to sing the song
a knowledge pure of life and death
a love so great, a frozen breath*

- and even

now

I think

of

BLACKEST BILE

*all around me
in the air hangs a wreath
of blackest bile, and smoke,
that only I can see*

*I open up my heart
and let it all in
and it kills all my love
and hope for everyone*

*and it hasn't been easy on you,
I know that more than most.
I am born to be alone,
I am just some lonely ghost*

*all around us
hangs an air of darkest doom,
and it flows out my lungs
and slowly fills the room*

*I open up my heart
and stick my fingers in,
but you will never want
what I have to give*

INDIANS SHOOTING STARS

I sometimes wonder about my childhood.


I remember almost none of it. It's all gone somewhere else. It isn't part of me, anymore, though I can still feel it if I feel very deeply. It is the opposite of a wishing-well: if I send the bucket down, it comes up with a reason why I am the way I am. Why things are as they are. Why I can't be happy. Why I have to die so young.

I remember one time:

There was a boy, larger than me. I was awkward, so uncertain and ugly. They threw rocks at me, all of them, but I think, now, that most of them did not quite mean it. They couldn't commit. He could. He threw with all his might; hit my face, my glasses. Connected with my temple and spilled blood down into my eyes. I couldn't see and I couldn't feel anything. There is an empty place in me and that is where it comes from.

They say we have, within us, cosmic forces, primordial things that are older than we are, much older. Basic. That those things are there either to protect us, or to hurt us. At that time I didn't know that, but now I see, in my self, in that moment, something very old, something very angry. Angry from the womb, sad and desperate always.

I moved so quickly, my limbs strong like they'd never been strong. My legs like trees, rooted so deep into



in total submission

the ground. Unmoving. Yet running, flying. My fists were like everything I'd ever wanted to say, carrying so much weight. All those words forgotten, or stumbled over. All those days, every one.

I knocked him down. I couldn't stop. I got on top of him; the others watched. I struck him, struck him, struck him. I reached down. I grabbed the rock. This is right. I felt it in my hands; I knew every atom of its structure. I knew what made it so hard. I knew how it felt. I knew what it was like to be buried so deep. I knew what it was to be made from earth, to be a lifeless stone. I brought it down. I brought it down again. I raised it up. Like a torch. I raised it up. Like a sword. I brought it down. His eye closed. There was no such thing as depression. I brought it down. A tooth spit onto the dirt. No such thing as sadness. A pool of blood. No such thing as acceptance. I raised it up. No such thing as fear. A scepter. A bible. A crown. No such thing as anything.

No such thing.

But they wouldn't let me finish. There were hands around my throat. Hands on my shoulders. It was back to the adult world, the modern world, a world where the old things are not welcome. A world with desks and books and parents and police. A world with rules.

I remembered once:

On a candy wrapper. Signs and symbols. There was a boy on a bike; there was a girl in a river. There was a



and submerge it entirely

grave in a mountain. And there was an Indian, shooting stars. Bringing them down. Embedding them in the earth. And I thought: that is what I want to be.

My father took me home and I wished then what I wish so often now: that the car we were in would skid off the road, and that none of us would have to be. That everything would be quiet. There would be no rules, and there would only be lifeless earth and stone forever.



and see the underneath

GRAVE FILLED WITH BOOKS

*I don't know what anything means.
I think I've forgotten how to sleep,
and I'm not the only one.*

*I will break my spine on the page,
like the books that will fill up my grave.*

*I am entombed in my bed
with those words that you said, that I kept:*

*that I'm not the only one
that you've never loved.*

boo, hoo.

COME OVER, COME OVER

“What is an afterlife,” Voor once asked; “what would satisfy you?” He never answered, but I often worried about it. I sat each day in my empty room, perching myself on the edge of a very deep, and very real, hole in the earth. Where did it go?

A place where everyone is evil, where everyone understands the deepest workings of the world. As if through some mystic ritual, they simply wish, and it is. They are like gods, but hooked, and bent, and crooked, and thus evil, and broken. A place where everyone is like that. A place where everyone is separate, and no one can ever belong to anyone or anything.

That sounded like a place I knew, I thought. That sounded so familiar.

Voor’s mother left him very early, and he grew up with his father, who was overbearing but not abusive, domineering but not nearly domineering enough. In the end, he was just like most of us; he wasn’t happy, but he didn’t die. Not right away.

Voor left school early. He never liked it. They said he once convinced his entire 6th grade class to hold a book burning; they burned every book in the school. Random. Mindless. Administration took the shelves out of the library and made it a teacher break-room. I don't know if the story is true. There are a lot of stories. But he had a way with people, even then. He knew what to say to them. He knew what they wanted to



of oceans, and rivers,
and earths, and fields

hear him say and he said it. He felt those things in his skin. I was never like that. I had no skin and felt nothing. Or too much.


He joined a traveling show. He had an act - no one knows when he invented it, or really what it was. All we have for a source is Voor himself, and he's untrustworthy; but then, so is everyone else.

The act was called the Witch Box. Voor recorded his opening monologue in his autobiography, *The Spiritual Asphyxiate: The True Diary of a Spiritual Rapist and Murderer*.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he would begin, "have you ever wondered what life is really made of... what these spaces around us, these seemingly endless and empty stretches of nothingness, are really composed of - because when you think about it, if we are surrounded by nothing, then nothing must be composed of something...but what could it be? That is exactly what I mean for us to discover tonight."

He would remove the black fabric draped over the table, revealing a black cube. It was worn, dirty. But sitting there, on the table, it seemed to be of great importance. Voor would very carefully avoid touching it, wouldn't allow himself to brush up against it. The audiences noticed, even if they didn't know they did. They always took in a deep breath when they saw it.

"This, ladies and gentlemen, is The Witch-Box. Its tale is a long one, and tragic, but it is true. You see,



let me stand in them, palms up.

my ancestors lived in a place called Dogtown, far away from here. They lived there because they were persecuted. Hunted down. Whips, lashes, and hangings, that was their lot. And so they banded together to crawl into the barest possible living. They starved, and they were miserable, and they lived there among the rocks and driving coastal rains for years and years.

Those who did not understand called it Witch's Village. They did not understand, and so they hated. These Witches, however, were not bent over old crones; they did not fly on broom sticks. No. They were the guardians of sacred and ancient knowledge, truths long forgotten by 'advanced' societies the world over. They knew what nothingness was. They had found the box in the woods. Buried under branches and leaves, housed among the pines and weeds.

They understood that Life was as much its opposite as it was its self. That it was like a skin on top of something much larger, and that if you made an incision into that skin, the slightest incision, the tiniest cut, that Death would leak out. Absence.

Think of it. You are alive. Alive right now. We can sense the world around us - the tent, rustling just so; a breeze moving slowly through us. There are sounds outside; people talking, footsteps, cries from the ferris wheel off in the distance. There are smells, I can smell...popcorn? The dust. But also sweat, the leather from someone's jacket. I know all this right now without thinking - these things, these beings and bodies and things, these are the things that prove to me that I am alive.

arms overstretched,
neck-crawled,



But yet - the slightest twist of my foot, and I will plummet down to the ground and snap my neck, and I will lie still, and hear nothing. The slightest rise in the chemical balance of my blood, just a few micrograms more of some chemical or other, and my heart will stop beating, and I will die. The slightest change in temperature, just a fraction of a fraction, really - locked in a motor-car, say, on a day that is slightly hotter than average - and my brain could stop functioning, and I will no longer exist anywhere as I do at this moment.

There is more death than there is life. And it is waiting just below the surface, and it is held back by the thinnest of possible membranes.

And the Witch Box will show you this. Indirectly, of course. May I have a volunteer?"

No one ever volunteered. He always had to pick someone. Sometimes he would pick the men, because he liked watching them tremble, and he found them amusing. The women often seemed to develop a connection to him. Every now and then, one would wait for him after the show, and they would retire to the small tent he slept in. He picked people then the way he would pick people in the future - based on their utility, what they could do for him, and do to him. He had a system. It was all a system then and it is all a system now.

The reaction was most important. The spectator would insert their arm into the box - even this took a great deal of courage. No one trusts Voor at the



and allow me to see



outset. He earns it over time. Their arms would disappear up to the elbow, and at first there would be nothing but the silence of the tent and Voor's patient, close-lidded breathing. Then they would feel some scraping on their arm, up and down the length to their elbow and back down to their fingertips. It wouldn't be pain, necessarily - but the closeness of the crowd and the darkness and the unsettling atmosphere would heighten their senses, and they would've felt as if that scraping were the most real of all possible realities - like things were moving inwards and becoming smaller. Like things were collapsing, and touching, things that had never touched and should never touch.

And then their arm would emerge from the opposite side of the stage. Not someone's arm; their arm, their hand, with their rings, their scars, their trembles and the scrape marks up and down the length of it. It would move slightly, they could feel it move; it would gesture to them. It would curl its fingers and motion-

come


over;

come

over

and Voor would lean in, close; he would breathe onto their neck. He would whisper: "But do you see it? What does it want you to do? What do you want you to do?"

The entire crowd would erupt in nervous shrieks;

A dark, grainy, and blurry black and white photograph of a car's interior. The image is mostly obscured by shadows and out-of-focus elements. In the upper left, there are two bright, glowing shapes that could be reflections or lights. The center of the image is dominated by a dark area where the text 'what is there' is written in a light, handwritten font. Below the text, there are some faint, blurry shapes that might be parts of the car's interior, like a seat or a dashboard, but they are completely indistinct.

what is there

several times the volunteers would jerk their arm from the box in a panic, all the tension of the moment spilling out as their arms were scraped and cut by the box's unfinished edges. And Voor would smile, and hold his arms out in front of him, as if to say, "But I've only just shown you. It's only just started."

I've thought a lot about the Witch Box, and what could've been inside it. Voor never told. He had everything to lose from being normal. But if you eliminate the possibility that he had a unique knowledge of life and death - and even after all this time, I feel uncomfortable doing so - and take into account all that was just about to happen - it's likely that the box contained a series of mirrors, perhaps pointed at others concealed just off stage, amidst the black curtains. Images would project onto one another and things would emerge from thin air. It was a common enough trick at the time. The spiritualists used it to make their ectoplasms emerge from nothingness and spill out onto the clothes and hands of the unsuspecting.

The difference was Voor himself. He knew great secrets, but perhaps not of the afterlife. He knew great secrets of humanity: how afraid we are, how uncertain about the things we pretend to be certain about. He knew we were all just about to unbelieve the very ground under our feet.

When Alice Rogers, just 11, put her hand into the box, she slit her wrist ever so gently on a piece of broken glass. She barely moved; she didn't say a word.



and what isn't.

Perhaps she was frightened of how her parents and older brother sat so still, of the man in the suit.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, and Alice felt not so much pain, as a warmth in her arm, a numbness. She must have closed her eyes, tried to concentrate. Not to ruin everything -

"Have you ever wondered what life is really made of? ...What these spaces around us are really composed of -"

- and soon there wasn't even numbness. At least, that is how I imagine it. Nothing at all - a nothing-at-all that moves slowly up her arm, to her shoulder and chest, and she leans ever-so-subtly against the table, rests her forehead down on the box itself. The audience barely notices -

"- because when you think about it, if we are surrounded by nothing, then nothing must be composed of something...but what could it be? That is exactly what I mean to demonstrate to you, tonight."

- and he leans into her, he breathes on her neck, and she is quite still. And her arm emerges from the curtain, but it hangs, it does not beckon. It does not gesture. Her arm is silent, and there are dark lines down her skin where the blood has gone, pulled downward by the earth, everything happening and then unhappening, an impersonal movement of atoms from one area of the universe to another area of the universe, and the crowd only notices when she falls forward onto the table and knocks the box to the floor. The broken mirror eats into her; where it once



: Allow me to ask

had been held back, it now plunges downward, and things are severed and atoms move to more and different places. And the image hangs there; it stays, though she does not. Suspended in the air. Whose arm was that?

If the Witch-Box was meant as a seance - meant to call spirits into the tent - then surely it was successful. One more soul in the air, and one less body on the earth. A spectral bride, wedded to the world, a meaningless gesture.



every important
question

EMPTY CHURCHES

*maybe I'm just feeling
crushed*

SLEEP TAPES

The following is a transcript of Robert Voor's "Sleep Tapes," originally printed in his book, The Dark Ocean. Voor described it as a "recorded encounter with the afterlife." A detailed examination follows. Please note: Voor maintained that he was asleep during the entirety of this recording.

VOOR: [incoherent]...on top of it once...I do.

VOICE: Robert. Robins.

VOOR: [tired, dull tone - droning voice, little enunciation] I don't...who is it.

VOICE: Father. Fatherer.

VOOR: The...do I know you?

VOICE: You know me. [background noises...possibly a desk being pulled away from the wall]

VOOR: [moaning] No....no...

VOICE: Father. You know me. You know me. You [unintelligible, more moaning].

VOOR: Oh god, oh god. Oh, god.

VOICE: There isn't god. Not. Not god.

VOOR: Please, please help me. Daddy. Please.

VOICE: I can't. I am in here. I don't [unintelligible]

because we have very many of them



VOICE: I can't. I am in here. I don't [unintelligible] any more than I did. Now. Not now.

VOOR: Somebody. [sound of movement, possibly Voor himself moving across the room to an empty corner.] Where am I. What is [unintelligible] to do. What is this.

VOICE: There isn't anyone or anything. Help me. You don't. Cant. I am your father and [unintelligible] forever. Not now.

VOOR: [moaning]

VOICE: This is the end.

[there is two minutes and 34 seconds of silence.]

VOOR: why, why. why, why.

VOICE: I can see through walls. I can destroy them, but I can't. My hands won't move. My hands can't [shuffling sounds, distortion on tape] reach.

VOOR: Can you see me?

VOICE: No. No.

VOOR: Where are you, I can't see you. I can't see you, where are you?

VOICE: I am at Dogtown. I am in the well. There isn't anything [unintelligible] where I am. It's empty.

VOOR: Empty of what...what is empty?

and at times, I feel that they



VOOR: Empty of what...what is empty?

[There is 47 seconds of silence.]

VOICE: Nothing you do will matter unless you know. You don't know [unintelligible] and I don't have any way out.

VOOR: I want to help. [moaning]

VOICE: There is weakness everywhere.

VOOR: There is weakness everywhere.

VOICE: There is weakness everywhere. There is weakness everywhere.

VOOR: I don't know what any of this means. I miss you so much. I wish I was dead. I wish I was dead. I wish I was dead. Help me. Please, please. Help. Release me. Help me. I need the square. I need to find the square. He told me of it once.

[There are 26 minutes of silence. The tape changes. Voor stated that he did not remember changing the tape, and may have changed it in his sleep. The sound of quiet sobbing is heard for the next 15 minutes, at which point the second tape shuts off.]

will never be answered



Though Voor originally discussed his experiences with EVP¹ in a pamphlet entitled “Sleep Tapes,” he did not fully analyze the phenomenon until the publication of *The Dark Ocean*, nearly four years later. As such, his recollections in that work can be considered suspect.

Still, the change between the two writings is striking. In his earlier work, Voor is orderly, academic, even meek; in *Ocean* he is ecstatic, practically falling off the page. He rambles, every page steeped in metaphor. He’s “given up on Western science,” he says, “in favor of the approach of the Sufi mystic; for what in life is graspable by the mind? Only the life of the mind, and the world of the mind, and the death of the body which is its vehicle. Life is wholly something *else*.”

The Dark Ocean is a deeply personal work, a stream-of-consciousness attack on the Christian afterlife and all that rests on its foundation. Though it is difficult to find a clear thesis, Voor introduced several concepts he would spend the next decade writing about: the spectral gaol (the idea that spirits are trapped on earth after death and that reality is limited in ways we don’t understand); the idea that ghosts are present among us, can interact with us, and that their presence can be verified with the “spiritual sciences”: the use of EVP recordings, spirit-photography, and what he called “half-deaths.”

Voor considered “Sleep Tapes” to be the most ground-breaking work in EVP to date. Others would likely have shared his view, had Voor been able to

¹ Electronic Voice Phenomenon.



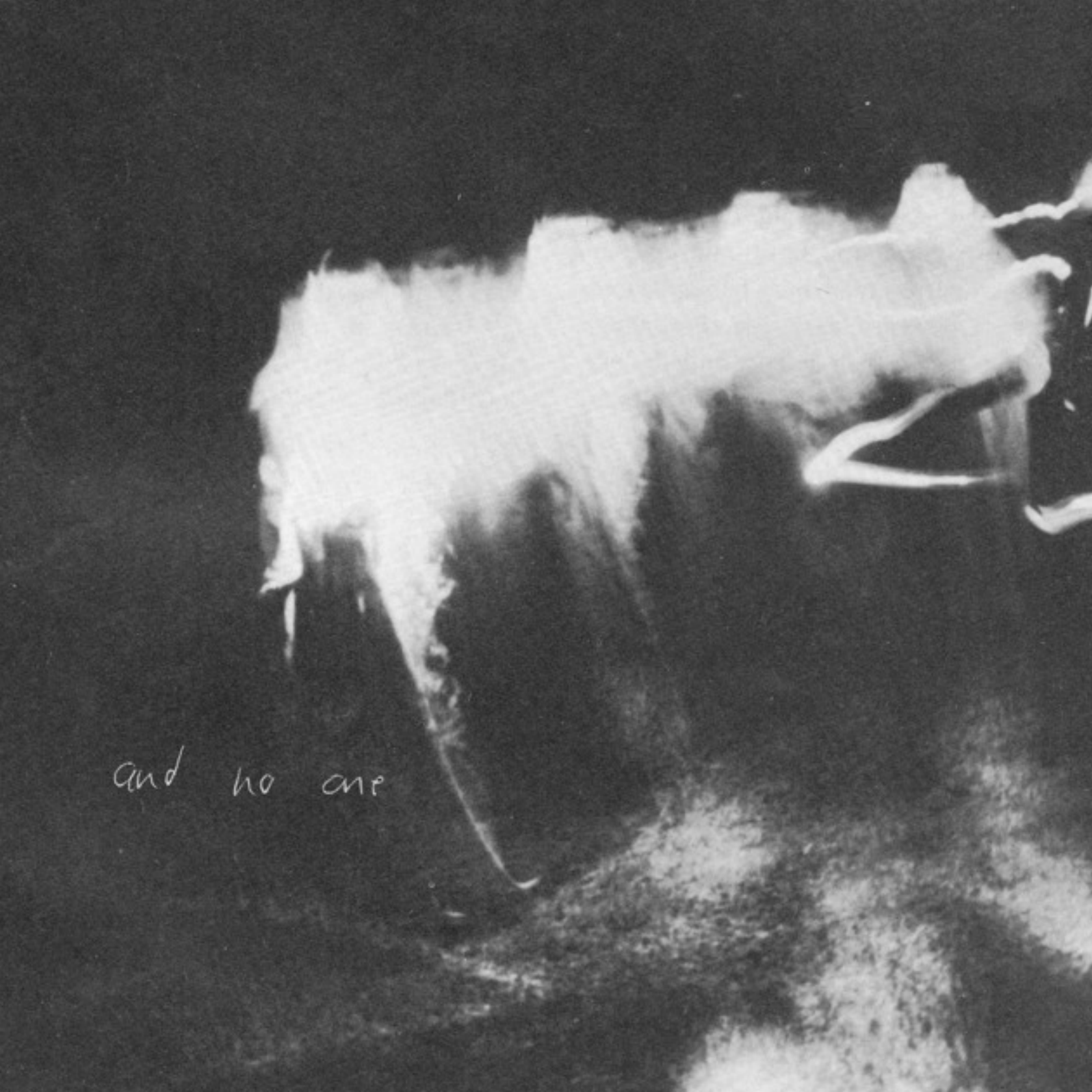
will never be put to rest

reproduce the actual recordings. As it was, all he was able to show anyone were his transcripts. There have been those who claimed that the tapes never even existed, a charge which Voor violently rejected, even on his deathbed.

Voor's interpretations of his experiences also differed wildly from those of the mainstream EVP community. Most EVP enthusiasts believed strongly in some variation of a Judaeo-Christian afterlife; they tended to be "spiritual" but not religious, people trying to make contact with something larger than themselves. Voor, in contrast, built his own unique cosmology around his experience, one in which the afterlife was not a reassuring element, but a physical manifestation of the rejection of life.

In Voor's world there was no joyous reuniting with relatives, no pearly gates, no soothing light. Instead, there was a prison: an aurora of ill-will that trapped souls within the orbit of the Earth. Ghosts spend their existence desperately trying to make contact with the living world, able to see it, even feel it, but unable to manipulate it in any way. "Ghosts are very often like the people they once were," Voor wrote, "but, without their bodies, they suffer invisibly; they suffer without hands to touch their own faces and without lungs to tell anyone what has killed them, and murders them still."

I think that most EVP enthusiasts - the people who stay up late into the night in abandoned houses, recording static and fluttering cellphone signals and asking questions of the dead - want to capture death. They want to hold it, to control it, and in the process



and no one

distance themselves from it.

Voor doesn't allow anyone that option. His afterlife is irrational. It is controlled by an all-powerful, all-knowing force, but is completely godless. It gives us a life after death, but one that is only a pale shade of the life we lived before; all the pre-destination of the Christian tradition, none of the solace. None of the mercy.

When I first read Voor, I recognized that place. When I first read Voor, I was open to nothing, and closed to everything. So was Voor. We opened to one another. He read what was in my heart and told it back to me. A true communion. The first person who understood.

And every time I read it, I felt worse

and worse

and
worse and
worse

and



KNOWS

I'M GOING TO DO IT

*there is no self to kill
a city of gardens*

*I'm going to kill my self
to kill my self
to kill my self
I'm going to kill my self
so there won't be nothing left*

*I'm going to remove myself
remove myself
remove myself
I'm going to remove myself
so there won't be nothing left*

*Because you are everyone you hate
when you're asleep or awake
all the choices you've made*

*you are everyone you hate
and it is ruining your life*

THE DARK OCEAN SOCIETY

After the publication of *Sleep Tapes*, Voor quickly found himself teaching others what he had learned, running small workshops out of his home. People who wanted to know what was on the other side of death were pulled to him. He was so sure of himself. Sure he knew what life, and death, were all about. He knew when life lied to us, and when it told the truth. He promised to only tell the truth. They believed him. True belief is so rare. Even those who say they do, don't. Not really.

At first, The Dark Ocean Society (named after one of Voor's most famous quotations from *Sleep Tapes*) existed mainly to meet and discuss Voor's work. They were full-time seekers - attracted to the next New Age thing, the next system or method that promised to make life something other than what it was. They had questions. They were just like all of us, no different; no evidence that they were depressed and lonely individuals, as has been reported. No evidence they were anything but normal, with all the pain and sadness that entails.

Voor introduced the Voor's Head Device to the group a year later. Once it became apparent what he was suggesting, the group lost most of its members; only the truly dedicated, or truly desperate, stayed.

They would sit in a circle and wear the hoods; they would sit silently, until one of them had a vision, or a seizure; and then it would spread amongst the group until they were sharing visions, rolling about on



any thing

the floor, climbing the walls. The police would be called. “Religious Disturbance,” reads one complaint form. That’s as good a description as any.

Initially, the Voor’s Head was only one part of the meetings. Over time it came to be more and more focal; eventually, they would put on the hoods and not take them off until the meeting was over. It became their purpose. Their Rite of Spring, of Rebirth; they were seeing the other world, seeing this world for what it was. Intoxicated.

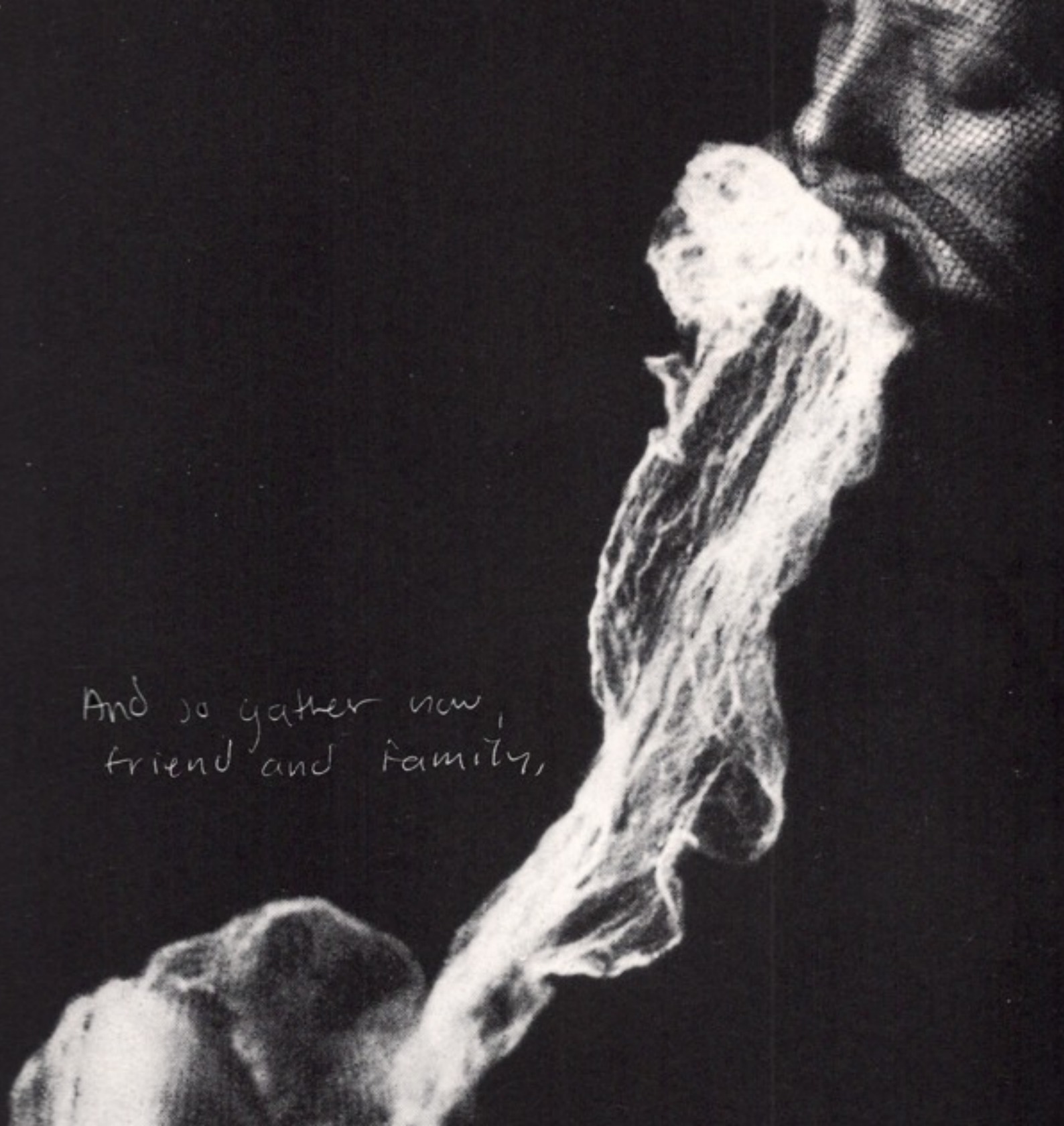
The effects are very gradual. Slight oxygen deprivation, over a long period of time. It is barely noticeable, but it is there. I’ve spoken to a few of them recently. They are not the same; at least, I assume not. Much slower to speak. Far less curious. Far less present. Far less everything.

“Every great discovery,” one of them told me, “has unintended consequences.”

It was after 5 years of this, 5 years of hallucination, of increased closeness amongst the group, of constant preaching and indoctrination by Voor - that Mary Singer brought her son, Scott, to a meeting. He was not the first child to be introduced to the group. As fate would have it, he was to be the last.

They would do various things, try different methods of achieving something like death, of breaking through the walls of the Spectral Gaol. It’s unclear what their end goal was; was it knowledge, or did they actually want to travel, to go to places they

And so gather now,
friend and family,



could not reach? I doubt they knew. Voor's ideas were constantly developing. He published several books during this period, using contributions from the Society to fund short-runs of cheap newsprint pamphlets.

One of his most successful innovations was "Decontextualization." Of all Voor's spiritual inventions, Decontextualization perhaps provides us with the greatest understanding of his underlying aims, as well as those of his followers, and let's be honest, my self as well, I can't

keep writing in here as if I'm not talking about myself, we all know well and fucking good exactly

what's happening and

I don't want to pretend anymore I don't want to pretend

that this isn't happening to me right now and every moment of every day and I don't know

how to

stop it

how can you just fucking

sit there?

around the table and join your hands



Decontextualization was a requirement for Voor's followers, and was about as close as we can get to understanding the the point of everything - the ultimate goal of Voor, his writings, his work.

Voor believed our lives are made of context; that context is all they are, their underlying nature, their atomic structure. He believed the things that happen to us, the events and the people that define us, are random - or if not random, meaningless. Events are simply occurrences that, were it not for context, were it not for the human mind projecting an illusion of meaning and connection, just wouldn't exist. He believed that if he could strip, completely, the context from a person's conception of the universe, then that person as we know them would simply cease to exist, and what would remain would be something better; what would remain would be a person that could not die, but also a person who could not be, a person who had escaped the shackles of meaning, of purpose, and of context.

There were a few ways he would attempt this - one involved diary-keeping. Writing, in general, and diary-keeping in specific, is the most powerful method with which we could give our lives context - Voor would say we are keeping diaries all the time, mental catalogues of everything that happens to us, constantly placing boundaries on events - we create time, for example, in order to say that an event happened at a particular moment, to give a beginning and end-point to something that has neither. Time provides a context, but then we layer more and more context on top of that - we create an identity, a philosophy of



and anchor yourselves

self, and say that certain events happened to certain people, certain people that were there and were aware of something that happened, and that's another context - and then we create place, in order to put boundaries in space - in physical space there are no real boundaries, we simply view things as being boundaries. There is no prevention of movement on a subatomic level - and so there is no such thing, physically, as a boundary in space - and so on and on and on, context after context, we layer these meanings onto ourselves, endlessly segmenting reality, which is truly an unbounded, uncomplicated whole. A solid wall.

But a diary - a diary is a completely personal philosophy of these boundaries, a completely personal context - it is a self-built narrative. Psychology and neuroscience have shown that Vior was correct in this - that the narratives we lay out, our memories of what has happened to us and the meanings and motives we apply to the things and people in those memories - are almost entirely fictional. Our conception of what is occurring is very different from the reality of what is occurring, if anything is occurring at all. Memory has been shown, again and again, to be unreliable. People create memories of things that never happened, edit and reshape their memories of things that did. We don't really know where we were at any given moment - don't really know what we thought, or how we felt. We only know the story we have told ourselves.

A diary is a physical relic that provides a narrative for the chaos around us, a map of the divisions and

to something hard and real

boundaries we've built. It doesn't record reality, it creates reality - through the process of narrating and writing, and re-reading, we create the reality of our past, assuring ourselves, repeating it - we literally write ourselves into existence. We build the universe up around us, tiny gods creating new worlds in every moment.

At least, that is what Voor believed. He thought that if he could decontextualize our reality, we could see it for what it is: Nothing.

And so he required all his followers to keep diaries. - minute, detailed diaries of everything that happened to them, inside the society and out. They all had them. One of the more revealing facts about Voor's followers is that these diaries should tell us a great deal, yet not a single one exists today.

Not a single one.

After a year or two, or more, of keeping this diary, of putting their truest selves onto its pages, Voor would ask them to destroy it. He would ask them to destroy it in a very specific way: they would take certain passages, passages that showed a specific emotion, or an important event, that told the meaning of a person or place - and they would cut, and cut, until they had only segments. No larger narratives, simply a mass of disembodied words and meanings. Items of reality, but not reality.

And then they would rearrange these pieces - into other



something physical
and inexcusable

narratives, reverse narratives, opposite realities, ideal narratives - and then, finally, they would write themselves out of the story altogether. What would remain would be a record of their life without them in it. And when that was all done, they would burn it.

When I first read about this I was - reluctant. I have always felt a compulsive need to record myself - to keep a physical manifestation of myself outside of my body, whether encoded in music, or writing. I have desperately needed that all my life. To destroy those things was a huge leap of faith. I lived more in my narratives than I did in the world.

But by then I had resolved to end my life, and I decided it simply didn't matter if there was anything left over afterward. I started the process. I read my diaries, and I cut, and cut. I eliminated. I removed. I erased. I cut and cut, and cut and cut.



do not forget your skin and bones

SPECTRAL BRIDE

*Angles singing in a choir
oh, my lord, I am on fire
what am I to do*

*voices singing into space
read their verse in my lonely face
what am I to do*

*because I don't deserve you
not even for a moment
not even for a second will I ever be saved*

*my love's out to get me
and you know
you know
you know it's going to succeed
and I hope I survive this fucking week
alone*

*and if I don't survive
I'll still be by your side
just clad in ghostly white
I'll be your spectral bride*

THE SPECTRAL GAOL

There are ghosts. And then, there are ghosts. There is accident, and then there is coincidence. And then there are the ghosts of coincidence.

There are ghosts.

You can catch them “in the flesh” - material things, patterns caught and frozen, a coming-together of events. A re-creation. A specter.

All the world is haunted, because everything has already happened. The world haunts itself. All events are, in fact, ghosts. Copies. Phantoms.

Ghosts of accident are simply that - collisions of probability, random chances. They are completely inevitable, and thus meaningless, meaning everything to everybody, and thus nothing to you. Or I.

A man falls dead just outside your car door. Your driver leaps out to rescue him. The car coasts to a stop against the curb. You watch from the back seat, the chest rises, the chest falls, the worried neighbor paces the street with a cell phone to his ear. The pieces move, and suddenly you are a year younger, a year un-wiser, sitting, staring, watching the paramedics pretend to try to save your dead father, because, as you will later learn, the paperwork required to find a dead body is far more tedious than the paperwork required to lose a patient en route. And so they load a corpse into an ambulance, and ride with it to the hospital.



do not leave them

They talk about their day, about what they'll do after work, watch the scenery as it moves slowly by. No one is in any hurry. The situation is understood by all except the people on the curb, watching the ambulance pull out of the driveway.

And somewhere else it happens somehow else, to someone else. And sometimes you watch from the backseat and remember, but for most of those times, you will never know. Those ghosts are invisible.

It repeats. Random.

A Ghost of accident.

Ghosts of coincidence, on the other hand, mean something. *Are* something.

We are a nation of seers. American spiritualists. We see the dead everywhere we go, and for such a young country, that is quite the feat. Snap a photograph. Press record. Close your eyes for a brief moment. All our dead friends and family are with us, all of the time. Tied to the ground, like legs stuck in cement. Standing frozen, like a forest. A forest of ghosts, for everyone, all of the time.

Voor called it the Spectral Gaol. "People who want to die," he wrote, "don't know what being dead is like."

Voor never wrote openly about depression, but if you read carefully, it is there. "All your movements take place within an invisible world - in everyone else's world, the physical world, no movement can take



behind you

place. Impossible. So you lie still, not daring to breathe too hard. And inside, in the invisible world, the unnatural world, every atom of your body is at war with itself.”

If we accept that we are surrounded by invisible spirits at all times, that we move through them, their arms are outstretched and touching our arms, their hair frozen out in waves and touching our faces - if we accept that, we can accept that we can move under them; that they can be on top of us. There can be spirits on our chests, right now, invisible weights on us, preventing our chests from expanding, stopping us from taking in enough air. If we accept that, then we should accept that their world can affect our world; that we move through the forest, but are of the forest as well. And we should accept that they do not want us to move; they want stillness, because they are of stillness. And we should accept that we are constantly being pulled into their world and out of our own. And we should hold despair, and depression, very close; because all humans are held down by spirits, and are pulled towards them, and sadness is their boundary. Their territory.

The Ghosts of coincidence are not simply things we remember, or flashes of memories. They are things we *can't* remember; things we never did, and will never do. They are shades of being that come into our selves and turn us downward, make us face the ground and dive into it, to meld with stone and inviolate earth. They slow us. They let us fall through air as if into sleep, as if nothing were happening, they close our eyelids for us, they calm our breath.

and I will now
perform the calling




They say:

It is all right. I have been here before, and so have you. I have felt all there is to feel. I have done everything and know everyone. I know all there is to know and have seen all there is to see. There is nothing else for you anywhere. There is nothing left. There has been a procession of all possible experiences, and nothing you have seen has brought you any peace, and nothing you have done has brought you any contentment, and no one you have known has brought you any love, and all that is left is to simply lie down and sleep, and I will help you do that.

Every living being has a ghost of coincidence that follows them, and it has a voice that gets louder and louder each passing year. Those that believe The Lie are able to hear its voice. Soon it becomes louder, and then louder still - until it is all you can hear, and the physical world becomes silent. There is the sound of the voice and there is silence, and the two coexist, so that no sound can enter, only emerge. All things become the one thing.

And the ground is so inviting. The ground is so quiet.

The Spectral Gaol, he called it. Every one, trapped. Every person who has ever died. No moving on, no other life. No matter what they did. There are only so many possible combinations, so many permutations. It isn't possible to escape; it isn't possible to end without regret. Everyone goes to the same place, which is nowhere.

A black and white photograph of a young girl with dark, curly hair, wearing a dark blindfold. She is dressed in a patterned short-sleeved shirt and denim overalls. She is seated at a table, with her hands resting on an open book. The background is a textured, vertically-ribbed wall. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

and many things

will begin to happen

What does it mean, I would whisper, at night.
Unable to move. Unable to disbelieve. What does it
mean?

But it doesn't mean anything

just

a ghost

NOONE IS EVER GOING TO WANT ME

*I'm armed to the teeth
like a fucking animal
I ruin everything
I get my bony hands on*

*and here we go, now
over the bridge of sighs
we will get a cross like christ, crucified
it's like a birth but it is in reverse
never gets better, always gets worse*

*I'll gnaw at anything
new england is mine, and
it owes me a living*

*step one
step two
step three
step four; we fall through the floor
fall through the floor
fall through the floor*

I want to feel like I feel when I'm asleep

WHAT DOES IT MEAN IF WE ALL DIE ANYWAY

Some people feel that uncertainty is equal to pain. "The worst part," they say, "is not knowing."

The Lie is not like that. The Lie is a plague of absolutes. That is its very nature - absolute, eternal certainty. All things are forever - they are known in fullness. Those are the words that are whispered. The mantra. The Lie has a true physical reality. It is carved into tombstones all over the world, in every country, on the walls of every house. It reads:

*What is now, has been always
What has been, will always be*

And so suicide is born, created, as if out of thin air. It turns happiness into nothingness. It erases the ledger, settles the debts. It is absolute certainty that misery exists, not only in the present, but always, and will always, stretching back and forth into all possible times.

Eternal suffering is nothing new. It is the True Banner of the Depressive. It projects outwards - no reprieve, not in the future, not in the past, not even in memory.

Voor wrote, not about it, but around it. "Nothing moves, nothing breathes, nothing lives. We are now, and have always been, in the wickedest kind of stasis." The Gaol, of course. We have been there. We know.



and I cannot control
what will occur

“In our ignorance we have created a simulacrum of life,” he wrote in a letter to Scott Singer, one of the many he sent and were never read. “The illusion of movement. We believe in change and life and that is enough to create a passing likeness of life, enough to fool the ignorant, but it is all a shadow that is clearly insubstantial upon any further inquiry. We are trapped forever in the middle of a universe we created, nothing more than our basest urges and cowardices.”

For Voor, ghosts were not seekers of redress; they did not, and could not, right wrongs or seek peace. Instead, they were echoes of our own illusions; they were us, unmoving, standing still in the face of truth, frozen solid by our own arrogance. When you died, he said, you finally *knew*. Just knowing was enough to root you to that spot forever.

To the depressive, his life is like what his death will be - a Complete Knowledge...Or the belief in a Complete Knowledge. That is the Lie. That is its very center: a belief in a knowledge we cannot have.

When Voor nearly killed himself, sometime after the Sleep Tapes were published, he created the Voor's Head as a way to test his hypotheses. He thought that what he would see would confirm his deepest beliefs - that there was nothing, anywhere, no existence, no possibility. Just endlessness forever, black paint on black canvas.

That isn't what he saw, and he didn't kill himself. But it didn't help me. And in the end it didn't help him.



because there are spirits all around us

WELLS OF DESPAIR

There is an axis, and this axis explains human consciousness. Or at least, a good deal of it.

The axis is a human invention; it doesn't exist in the world outside ourselves. The Axis is a way of thinking about the universe; or more specifically, of thinking about what we think about it.

Imagine it this way: There is a square, and this square is subdivided into four spaces. The spaces correspond to what happens in the universe, and our expectations of what will happen.

Thus, there are four possible combinations:

1. Things which exist in the universe, and are accepted.
2. Things which exist in the universe, and are not accepted.
3. Things which do not exist in the universe, but are accepted.
4. Things which do not exist in the universe, and are not accepted.

The further something falls off the axis - that is, the more it does not occur or does not conform to our expectations - the less we notice it.

We almost never think of all the things that might confirm our beliefs, but do not occur. We will notice almost any occurrence which confirms our beliefs, however.

THINGS WHICH HAPPEN

THINGS WHICH ARE ACCEPTED

THINGS WHICH HAPPEN,
AND ARE ACCEPTED

THINGS WHICH ARE ACCEPTED,
BUT DO NOT HAPPEN

THINGS WHICH HAPPEN,
BUT ARE NOT ACCEPTED

THINGS WHICH ARE NOT
ACCEPTED AND DO NOT
HAPPEN

Unaccepted occurrences are within the realm of our consciousness, but often pass unnoticed. Invisible.

Ghostly.

The axis affects everything we see and think; it changes the world around us. The world creates the axis, by supplying us with evidence, but once the axis is in place, our ability to perceive conflicting evidence is compromised. We create certainty when it cannot be found externally. We build a world in which it is possible to believe in truth, all the while ignoring the mountains of evidence to the contrary.

When applied to our beliefs on suicide, the axis is quite revealing. I realized this very shortly after attempting to end my own life. I began at one point, one belief; I ended at another.

The process is as follows:

We begin with the stated belief on suicide. We can call this the “Social Construction of Self-Harm.” It states:

Sad people commit suicide. They have suffered some trauma; a loved one leaves them, they lose a job, or a loved one is killed; their children, perhaps, run over in the street. Drug use is often involved; drinking, for example, to numb the pain before it overwhelms them. They turn to death for relief. Suicide is thus caused by a defective mental state, which is in turn related to outside forces and events.

there are ghosts at our sides



It seems innocuous. It is a fully-featured, internally-logical theory of suicide.

When laid out on the axis, however, it begins to fall apart.

The phenomena we notice tends to fall into the categories we expect: people who kill themselves and were depressed. People who don't kill themselves and aren't depressed.

And yet, any number of ghosts fall between these divisions. For example, an extraordinarily large number of people get depressed, but do not kill themselves; in fact, most adults will experience some form of depression within their lifetime. I am now one of those, and will, no doubt, experience depression again. It is as much a part of my self as is the color of my eyes.

The vast majority of the depressed do not kill themselves. These millions do not fall into the tidy categories of the axis, and so we ignore them.

More frightening, perhaps, is the shockingly high number of people who are not depressed, but kill themselves anyway. These people give no outward warnings; they do not give away their things, they do not lay in bed for weeks, they do not stop seeing friends and family. They do not withdraw. Up until the very end, they are living; up until the very end, they are engaged with life.

They are the most damned of all.

COMMITTS SUICIDE

IS Depressed

COMMITTS SUICIDE
AND IS Depressed

IS Depressed and
does not commit
suicide

COMMITTS SUICIDE,
IS NOT Depressed

IS NOT depressed,
Does not commit
suicide


They are also the cases we do not notice, the ones that slip between our fingers. They are the ones that suggest that something else is happening; that depression and suicide may be linked, but that connection is not causation.

These are the cases that imply that there is no causation.

Think of it: *There is no causation for suicide.* It simply is. It walks between us like a ghost. It hides between the tables of the axis; it eludes us. We don't see it, but it is always with us. It is all of our fathers, and all of our mothers, and everyone we've ever loved. It is everywhere, but disconnected. Loose of the moorings. No feet on the ground. Floating over the earth.

What does it mean that there is no causation? That there is nothing that causes, but simply phenomena, things disembodied, no thought, no prime mover? Verbs? Doings, stripped of personhood?

Voor knew. He claimed to know. You can look at his entire career as a way of saying to the world, "Look at me: here I am, lonely; here I am, confused; here I am, perched so close to death. When I speak, when I can push into the world something new and horrible and terrible, then I am the causation; I am the causer, and the creator; and that thing is given meaning, my meaning, and I can imprint that meaning onto the universe, and I can make it what it should be, and no longer what it is." And he would try and try and try to do something new in the realm of the spirit, he

A black and white photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a white, short-sleeved, textured shirt. She is looking down and holding the hand of another person whose arm is visible from the right. The background is dark. A large, dark, cloud-like shape is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text "there are shades in every corner" written in a white, cursive font.

there are shades
in every corner

would loose all the ghosts and people into one giant, boiling cauldron; and what would follow would be something caused, something deliberate. Something *his*.


This is where we talk about Dogtown. This is where I lay it out as best I know how.

There were two Dogtowns - one in Massachusetts, in the 1700's, and one in New York, in the 1980's. They were very different, but they had certain similarities.

As the Dark Ocean Society grew to about 40 members, Voor decided that seclusion was a necessary element of spiritual development. He said it would be a movement towards True Freedom, to a destruction of the wall between the living and the dead, of the dissolving of sadness, of the elimination of guilt.

True Freedom. It sounds nice to me, even now. Even though I know what is going to happen.

It's always been interesting, to me, how cult leaders (and by this point, if not much earlier, that is clearly what Voor had become. Did he plan it that way? Somehow I doubt it. He craved attention, he wanted love and affection and he wanted to be respected; he wanted to be reunited with dead loved ones; he wanted to be free of pain. His crime was that he believed he could do so. His crime was that he believed, and he told others; if what followed preyed on the worst parts of his personality, well, I'm sure it would've done the same to me. Or to you) convince

A black and white photograph of a man with glasses and a necklace. The man is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. He is wearing a dark, high-collared garment and a long, thin necklace with a small square pendant. The background is dark and out of focus. At the bottom of the frame, the top of a woman's face is visible, looking upwards.

I can feel every one

people to leave their homes, their families. Just pack up and leave. One day, you're there, happy, living, with everyone, engaged. The next, you've disappeared; no note, no goodbye, just gone, an unphysical presence.

To disengage so fully from someone, everyone, everything. To simply unattach. We ask "why?" on the outside, but we secretly wish it for ourselves. I've thought about it. I've thought

walk into her house. a party, maybe. everyone there. things move in slow motion. I float through, not really engaging, making eye contact, waving, smiling, but not talking. make the rounds, only once. make everyone see you, but don't make anyone realize. make my way to the door. put my phone on the table by the couch.

when they call it, worried, it will ring. they'll hear it, someone will find it. but that won't happen until later. before then, I get to my house. before then, I open the door and go in. before that, I draw the blinds. I lock the doors. cancel bills. name off the mailbox. name off the door. sit in the dark.

they will come by. they knock but there's no answer. no one's seen me. they wonder. peek in the windows. but there isn't anything there. it's an empty house. it's an empty house and so there can't be anyone inside. and so I'm not inside, I am nowhere, seeing no one, no connections, not tangled up, not caught. Not anywhere, not anything.

I've thought that. It can't be much different. It isn't about fear of the world, it isn't about retreat from



I know we are alike

about fear of the world, it isn't about retreat from pain. That's what people always say, people who don't know. They don't think it through.

What it really is about is spite. Hate. Self-pity. A wish to harm the outside world. Suicide is not self-harm. It is world-harm. It is an attack on the universe.

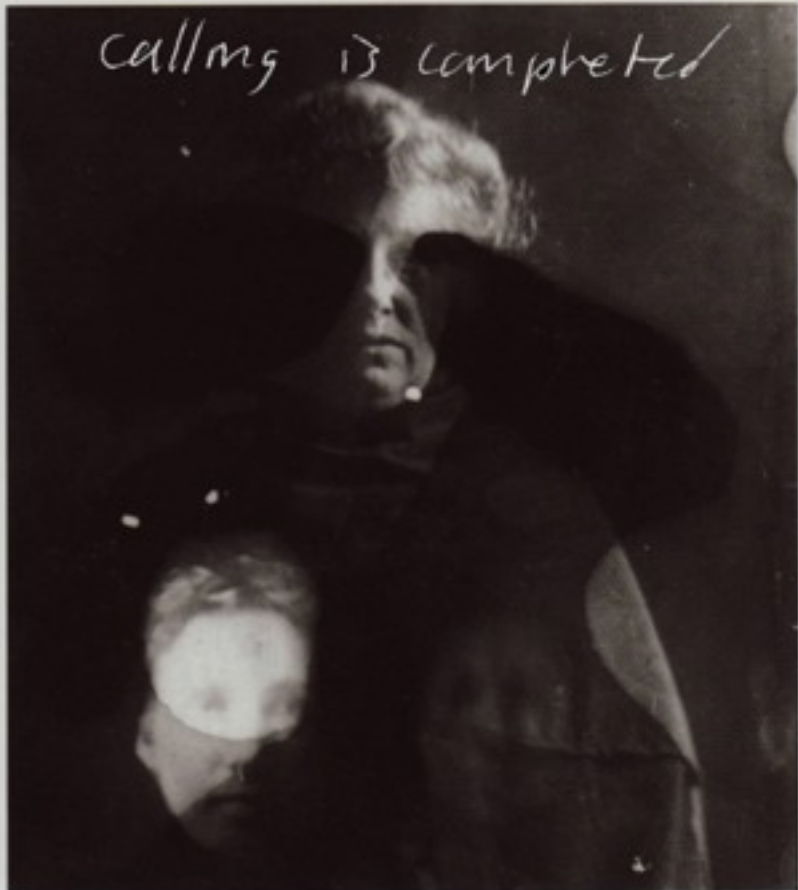
Whoever was willing moved to their new center of operations, a 4 -building "compound" Voor named Dogtown. It wasn't anything more than a couple of shacks, really; the rooms were barely big enough to sleep everyone, and the shelters they built to house newcomers would frequently collapse. They thought the physical world was composed mostly of lies and illusion; they weren't surprised when it would fall in on them. They blamed the ghosts, not their own work.

Dogtown was set deep into a wood, a forest that bordered state land. No one ever went out there, which, I am sure, is how they wanted it. Set apart from other people, the group could dedicate itself to its "psychic research;" they began to wear the Voor's Head Devices more and more frequently. Gradually, the bags became the focal point of their practice. They slept with them on. On quiet nights, it sounded like the whole camp had a pillow pressed over its mouth.

Later, when everything was falling apart and the media got involved, one reporter said that upon nearing the main clearing between the buildings he was greeted by "an entire group of black-hooded figures. Women, children, old men; the black fabric



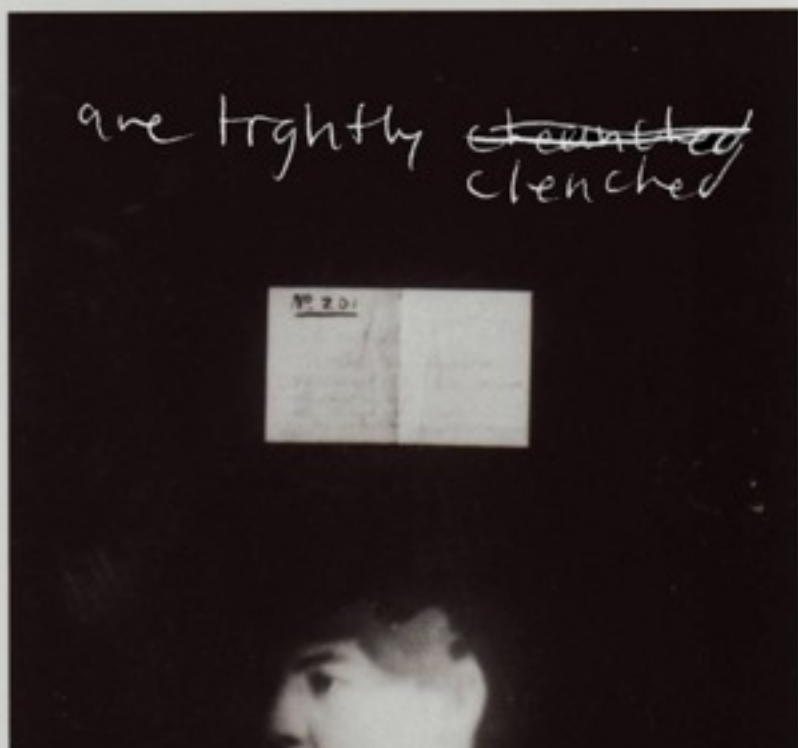
and when the



calling is completed



and your hands



are tightly ~~clenched~~
clenched

W 201

would move, slightly, with the in and out-take of their breath. They reminded one of fish; like everyone was underwater, like maybe the flood had come, and wiped everything away, and this was it.”


Did the hoods affect them? Some say yes, some no. Personally, I don't think any of what was about to happen would've happened without the Voor's Heads. I think things look very different when you have your eyes closed. When you're having trouble breathing.

If you've never worn one, the effect is hard to describe. It isn't simply a bag over your head. It represents a fundamental severing of your connection with the outside world; it muffles your hearing and blocks smell as well as sight. Your breath quickly fills the bag, leaving just enough oxygen to keep you conscious and moving. You feel light-headed, lucid; instead of feeling cut-off, you feel your senses have been heightened. You trust everyone. You feel your skin so profoundly, the lightest physical touch can result in great pain. Or pleasure.

Mentally, you are prepared for whatever will happen; but, even before putting on the hood, you've made the decision to do it; you're committed to the people around you, prepared to trust them while you are vulnerable.

Most importantly, you are more concerned with death than life.

That's what this is all about, isn't it? Seeing the dead.



and the room has filled with smoke
I will lie here

Speaking to them. Knowing their smell again. Hearing their voice again. Hearing them say your name. Feeling it all come up in your chest, feeling those emotions rush to your eyes. Being free of it all. Finally knowing where they are.

Isn't that what it's all about?

The fact that they were wearing them so often suggests that their fragile connection to the outside world was breaking down, if it hadn't already. The living world wasn't there anymore. They were with the dead.

By my own best estimate, based on letters written to Voor much later, Scott Singer was probably 8 when he arrived at Dogtown.

Scott was an attractive, intelligent child. He had blonde hair and blue eyes, and a charming demeanor that made him a favorite among Voor's followers. All other children had left the fold, and Scott's presence probably supplied a reminder of the outside - of the continuing, living world - that they sorely lacked, even if they didn't know it. He played in the woods, slept well, and enjoyed being the center of attention. He was the only child in a world of adults. He was probably happy.

I often think about those woods. I played in the woods as a child. Did Scott find old trees and hide his toys in them? Did he outgrow those stories?

In the meantime, Linda Singer became more and

I will not be able to move or stand
I will not be able to feel love or fear
I will not be able to hold a job
I will not be able to let this

90



more integrated into Society life. Voor took a special interest in her, and would often privately tutor her on spiritual advancement. She became adept at the use of the Voor's Head, and reported elaborate visions. Her later recountings show a woman deeply moved:

“At first, I feel I am in a long, dark cavern; as I walk I can feel the dampness all around me, a condensation on my skin that is cold and aches; but then I am out, and have come out into a world that is so bright, so densely packed with red and green and deep, deep blue that my breath catches in my chest; Then I see that I am looking at a river, and the river is flowing backwards; I know it should not be so, but it flows against itself, somehow, as if I could see the river before some force changed it, could see the past as clear as the present; and in that river, standing waist deep, is my husband; and he is so beautiful, I long for him so intensely; I can feel every part of my body crying out, all that pain and sadness, and it could be washed away in that moment; I know just where he is standing, but can't quite move there; I pick up my legs and they won't obey me, they are so heavy, so clumsy, and I splash through the water and it fills my mouth so I can't yell out, and splashes up into my face and covers my eyes, and when I come up again he is further away, and I am taken down again, and up again to see him receding, he doesn't know I am there, but I know he is there, and the water takes my body with it and we travel together and I am happy...”

What you think of all this is up to you.

Maybe Voor saw some kind of spiritual power in



Will I find peace
or nothing at all?

her. Maybe her visions impressed him. Maybe he saw weakness.

He saw weakness everywhere.

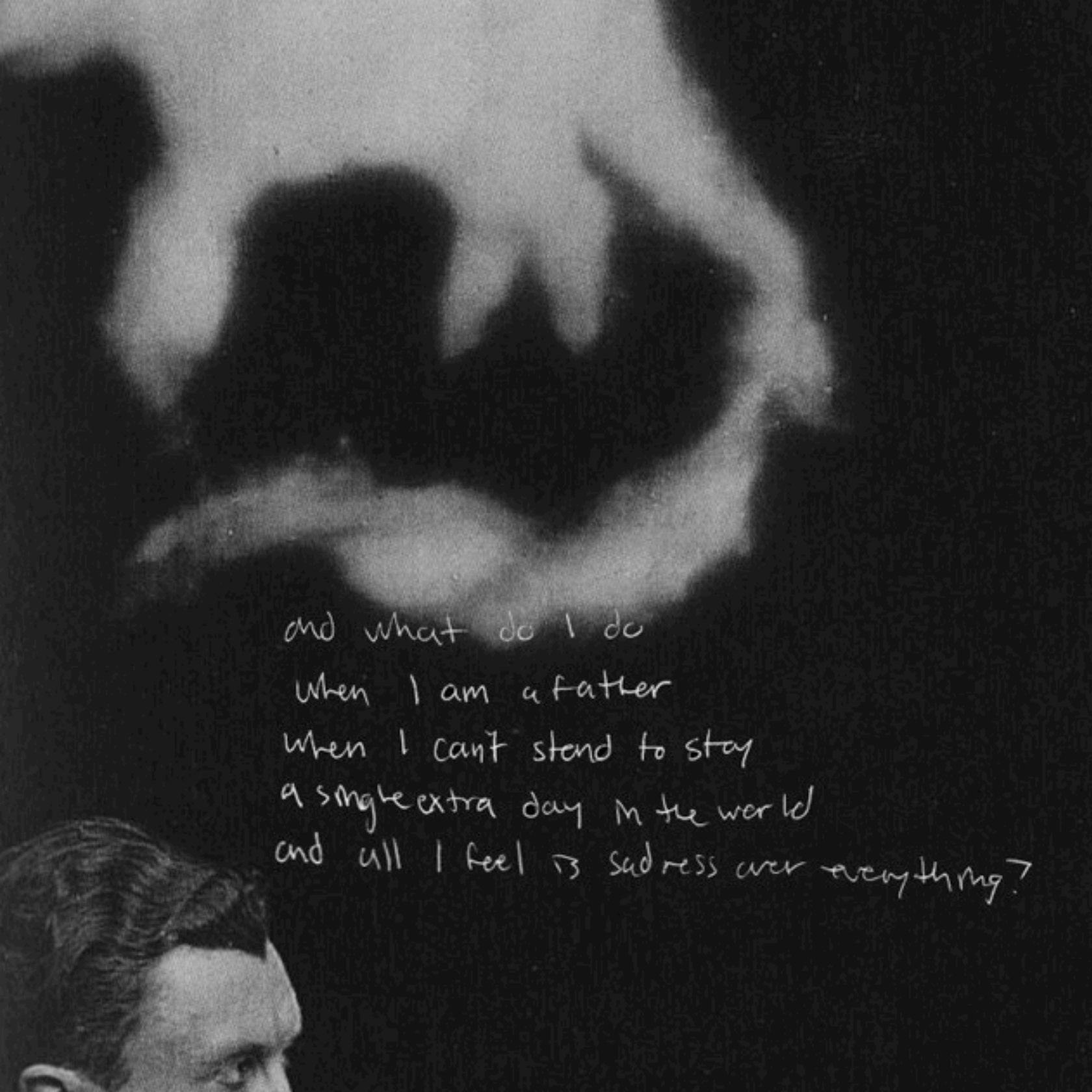
Then again, maybe he didn't care one way or the other. Maybe it was Scott, from the very beginning, that he was interested in.

How you see what happened depends on your view of Voor, and your view of the people who believed in him. There is little definitive evidence. In the absence of evidence, all we have is feeling. Suspicions. I have felt that while writing this: that I don't know enough. That I can't talk about it. That I can't capture reality with these words. That I am too weak. That it isn't enough.

All we know is:

On a day in September, Scott Singer was lowered into a well. They called it the Well of Despair. It sat back along the tree line. A tight-fitting covering was placed over its mouth. Voor designed it; it allowed food to be lowered through a small flap without allowing light into the well. Scott Singer stayed in that well for nearly two years, until he was rescued by Police. He fought them. He said he didn't want to come out.

By that time, Voor was in the hospital and Scott's mother was dead. In two weeks, Voor would be dead. A year after that, Scott would kill himself. And two years after that, I would write these words:



and what do I do
when I am a father
when I can't stand to stay
a single extra day in the world
and all I feel is sadness over everything?

you have an idea
and you make it real
isn't that God does?



How do I be happy?

A SLEEPING HEART

*if I die
and I will
oh please, please bury me
in the ground by the school
where I once worked*

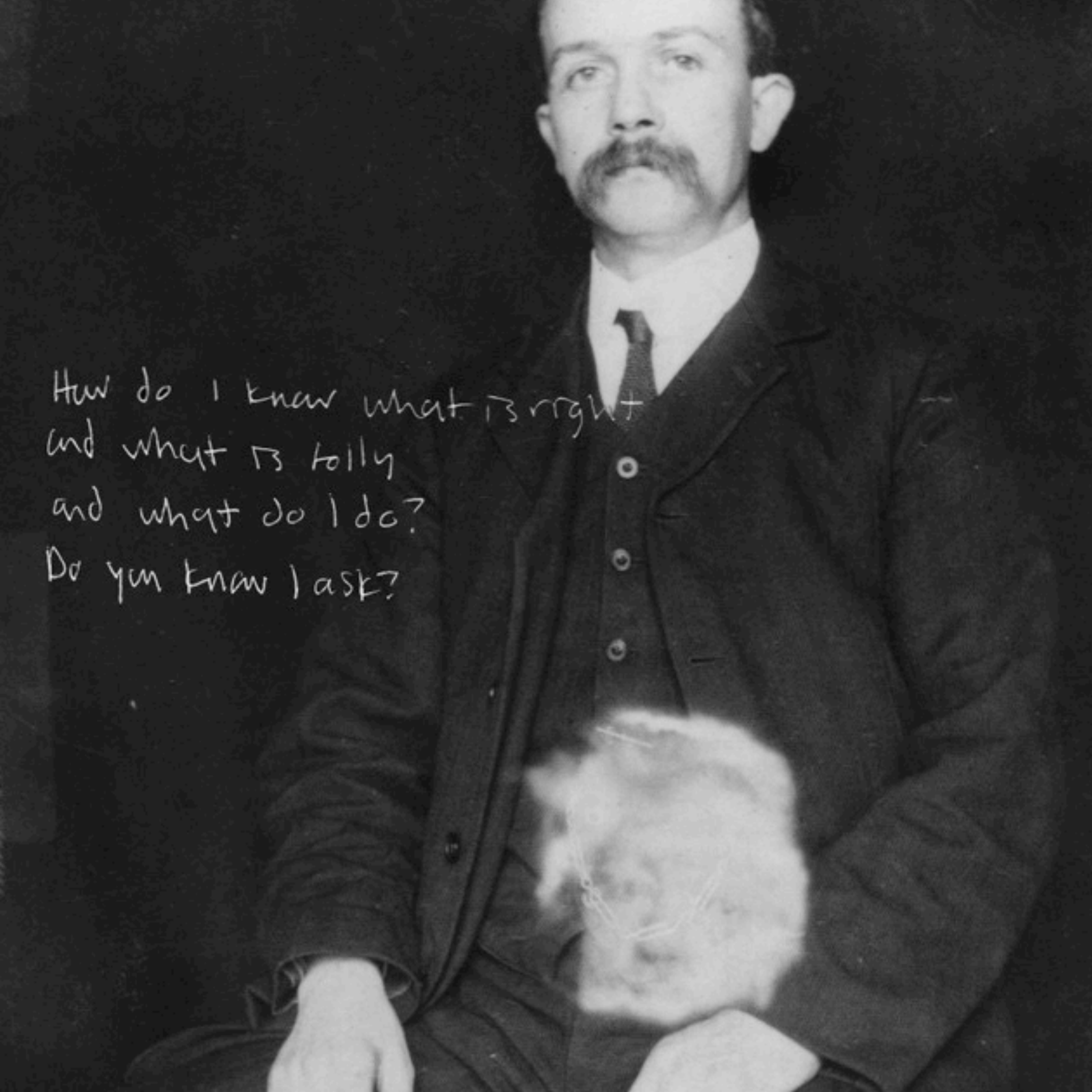
*if I'm killed
as I will
oh please, please raise a stone
and inscribe all of these here lonely words:*

how do I wake your sleeping heart?

OLE WORM

A Portrait of my life without me in it:

everything about it is increasingly hostile
something it did
there are no possibilities
there are no possibilities
It'll never start over
not possible
worthless piece of shit
there are no other options
such incredible pressure
everyone is happy
why do we love anyone
lay its head on a black column
had awful dreams last night
it is pathetic to want it so badly
It's going to do it
make an excuse
leave the room
drop the phone on the table on the way out
drive home
close every shade
delete writings
never go out
never contact anyone
no one will know
quit the job
just stay inside forever
it will do this, It swears
nothing worth being conscious for
It made plans today
didn't work, big surprise



How do I know what is right
and what is folly
and what do I do?
Do you know I ask?

there are no good signs
the worst part is imagining
looking over sleepily, smiling
it is the worst thing it can imagine
easy to pretend
but it isn't
chest tightened
this is all so pointless you are such a piece of shit
has been miserable forever and is only just now
realizing it
It doesn't know what to write
this hurts so badly
It won't know what living like this could possibly
be like
FUCK
no one gives a shit about it
picture everyone with someone else
thinks being alone is better than being with it
this life is so fucking worthless
it has to believe this will work
once you know it won't, it can't
it is weak and empty
It couldn't stop
It was emptied out
this place is new but it doesn't feel like it
last night was horrible
back at work, please jesus let it be all right
we know we won't but we want to be
always sad around the edges
forgetting, maybe, or forgotten
all this hope bullshit is bullshit
what does it mean to be always sad
and to never feel life in your bones
never, everyone

~~Am I~~ Am I the only one
in this room

and if there exists a life after death
and you exist and you know me

BURIED ABOVE GROUND

*there's a devil on my back
there's a devil on my legs
there's a devil on my chest
there's a devil on my neck*

*I've been wailing like a child
at the bottom of a well
I've been pacing like a man
in a prison cell*

I get buried above the ground

GILES COREY

I know.

I know Giles Corey was crushed. He wouldn't commit; wouldn't put in a plea, wouldn't say "Guilty," wouldn't say "Not Guilty." Wouldn't choose. Refused to take part.

I know.

I know he was crushed. Either he could be crushed, or he could be hanged. Have rocks placed on his body, all flat under a wooden board, almost natural, like being caught in a storm. Or he could have had the bottom drop out from under him, and dance in the air with a rope around his neck, carefully tied. To be clear-cut. To be humane.

I know Giles Corey refused to be humane. Refused to pretend. Refused to say, "Everything is all right; this is all part of everything that happens; I accept what happens to us, and I will take part in it." He was not executed. He made them murder him. He made it ugly. Made them see it for what it was. Stripped them of their disguises. Made them real to themselves. Let everyone see. Called everyone around.

*Stand in a circle
Push my tongue back in my mouth
watch it roll back out
Nothing more
Nothing less*

Why haven't I seen you

Why haven't you come?



A spell. Try saying it. Under your breath. Late at night. Magic.

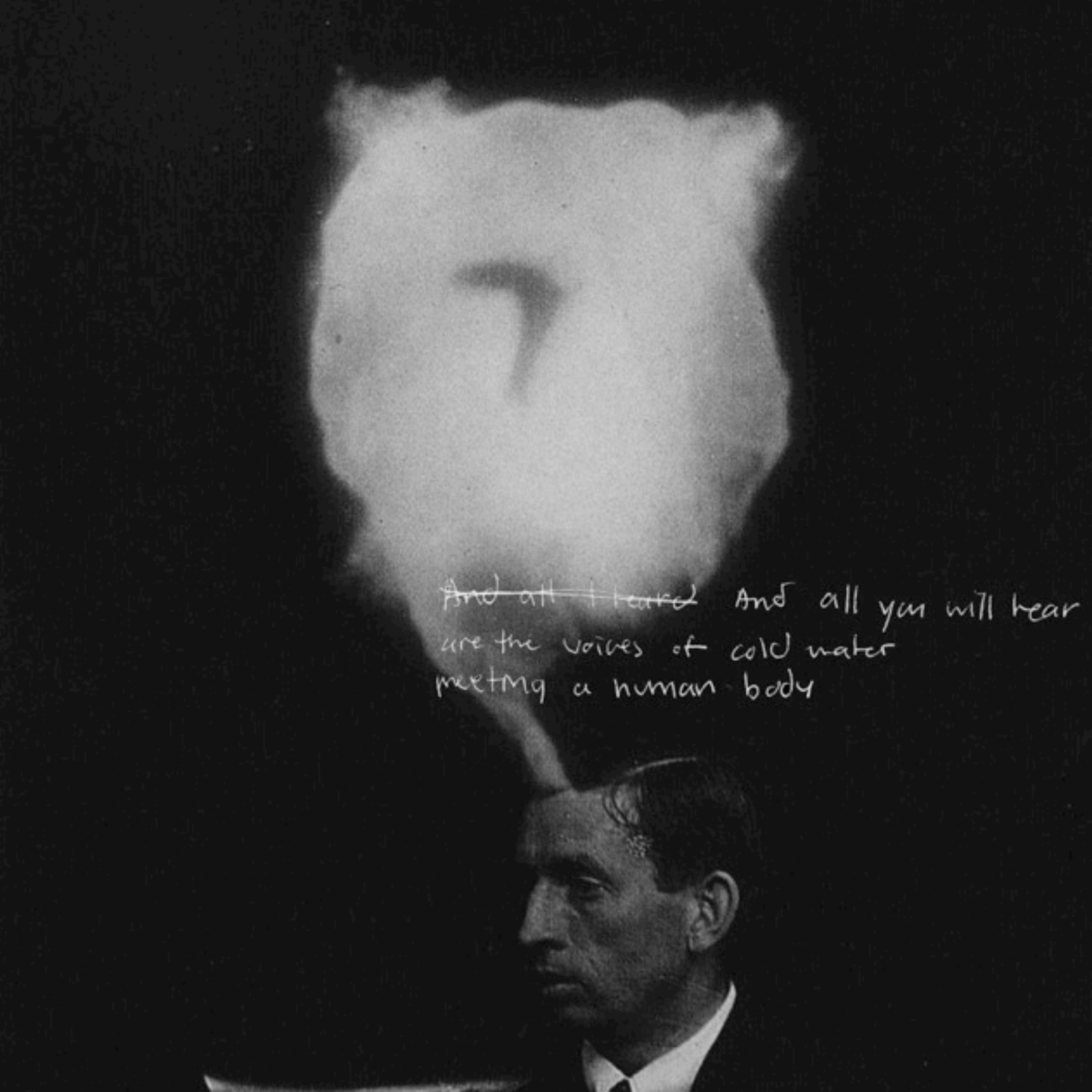
So often I feel this about life. Everything is so heavy. No one seems to notice. They all seem to know some secret; everyone seems to know.

It seems not to bother them, they seem not to be consumed by so much doubt, so much hate for everything that I am and have let myself become, hate for who I am when I sit around and watch TV and do not create or do and do not walk out in the world and do not write letters and do not compose music and do not start a business and do not make up with old friends or call them or do the things my father would have done. Everyone seems to live in a world where those stones are not on their chests, where those people are not shoving, with a long stick, their tongues back inside their mouths, and I feel as if I am the only one on the ground, and if so, than that must mean that everyone else is standing around me, and I am in the center, and they are on the periphery, and the fear begins to set in that

I am suffering alone in the universe

and perhaps there was no one else, to begin with. Perhaps I made it up.

That is their world. That world. That world is the world in which Giles Corey was crushed, and he lies there still. Crushed flat. Undone -



~~And all I heard~~ And all you will hear
are the voices of cold water
meeting a human body

our patron saint

of sadness forever

- but on my better days, I say:

That is not my world.
I choose a different world.
I create a different world.

In my world, there are no stones. There is no circle.
There is no stick, and no tongue, and no gallows,
and no misery, and no death.

Their world is not This world.

In this world, the rocks tumble down onto me. In
this world, I can feel every ounce of their weight
on my back. On my legs. On my chest. On my
neck. I know every single inch of them, I know
every crack in their earthen shells. I feel every bit
of pain, I feel every moment of sadness, I feel
every night of loneliness, all in my bones, all in my
self, all of the time, every day, forever. Everything
is forever, in my world. Everything stretches out as
far as my eyes can see.

And in my world, I shrug my shoulders. In my
world, I turn my back. I spit. I curse them. I curse
every person. I do not care. Not for love, not for
anything. I do not care. I do not care for
dependence or need. I do not care for desire or
sexual contact. I do not care for comfort. I do not
care for peace.

I do not care.

And I move. I breathe. I crease my forehead. Grit
my teeth. Stretch my legs. Feel my arms. Feel my



and that will be your answer.

I think of him. I think of his hoods. I think of his specters and spirits. I think of his ghosts. I think of his fears and his outrages, of the people he hurt and the people he carried. I think of their faces, and I think of mine. I think of his. I think of his hate. I think of his worry.

I think of his Lie.


And I move. I breathe. I crease my forehead. Grit my teeth. Stretch my legs. Feel my arms. Feel my ribs. Feel my body. I hold my hands in front of me. I turn one over; they are covered in grass; they are smeared with dirt, and blood; I read the lines in my palm. It is my self. It is my servant. It is not who I am. I am who it is.

And I am crushed. Utterly crushed.

And then, I get up.



I am not dead

A dark, grainy, black and white photograph of an industrial cityscape. In the foreground, a river flows through the city, with several small boats visible. The middle ground is dominated by a large, dark building with a prominent, tall, narrow chimney on the right side. The background shows a city skyline with several tall, pointed spires, likely a cathedral or church. The sky is filled with thick, dark smoke rising from the buildings, creating a hazy, atmospheric effect. The overall tone is somber and industrial.

I am only asleep

AFTERWORD

Giles Corey was recorded between 2008 and 2010, in various bedrooms around Connecticut.

Mastering by James Plotkin. plotkinworks.com.

Some samples of EVP recordings on this record have been taken from the PARC reissue of *The Ghost Orchid: An Introduction To EVP*.

Many of the other EVP recordings on this record were recorded live in Middlefield, CT.

Some of the photos are from the excellent collection provided by the National Media Museum. More can be found at:

www.flickr.com/photos/nationalmediamuseum

This record is a product of ENEMIES LIST HOME RECORDINGS. For more information:

www.enemieslist.net

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If you are thinking of committing suicide, don't.
Call 1-800-273-8255.

Giles Corey was written and performed by Dan Barrett.

Thanks.