

Jumbo Mountain Fire Lookout, 2015

I wake surrounded in beauty, and I am not trying to be metaphysical. I wake in the morning to a one-room building with exactly twenty-six windows, not counting the windowed door. My one-person bed is perched in the far northwest corner; if it gets too hot in the late afternoons when the sun moves over to the west, there is a shade above the bed I can pull down over one of those twenty-six windows. An octagonal prism hangs there, which sends rainbows of streaming lights around the room, so I am generally averse to covering it.

At 4:30 in the morning, if the shade is not drawn, I can see the blood-orange hues of the moon shine out of the black clouds of the remaining night.

I try to photograph the sunrise sometimes. In other words, I try to photograph the edge of night fading to day on the west side of the horizon in the black of morning. My camera doesn't like it. So, I try to get more sleep and promise to remember the experience in words, even though I know it won't work.

My alarm goes off at 7:00, but I have been awake for hours living the night sky in my dreams, the sky clouded with faces of people I have known and sensations I have experienced. Usually, there are fires--not tangible ones like the tree getting torched when we were all watching a lightning storm in late June at Big Prairie---but the outlines of them: an incapacity to fully breathe, a driving sense of urgency, an overriding nod to forthrightness in the midst of calamity, and colors like you have never seen.

I'm tired of trying to put things in orderly lines so others can make sense of them. My life is a whirling, twirling mess that I adore. I am here in celebration of things I want for no particular reason except to have them for myself. I want to be free of making sense.

I live here alone on the top of a mountain that is windowed on all sides. I look out onto the clouds and peaks and birds all day every day. Sometimes, there are goats. There is a bunny who sniffs around near the entry on the southeast side of the lookout in the evenings. I have tried making friends with all of these things, mostly to no avail. But I've got time. Suddenly, a lot of it. And I have heard that it takes time to know a place.

I think I write best in the mornings, when the dewiness of the hours set aside for sleep is still upon me. I don't feel pressured to make sense, which is nice, because most of the things I care about don't. Why would anyone shut herself up in a glass house on the top of a mountain alone? I don't know. I think that's why I'm here.

The sky is always changing. I know that you know this, but do you really know this? Have you watched the sky longer than thirty minutes during a storm, maybe when you were supposed to be picnicking? Have you watched the sky change over the span of a day? The span of ten days? The span of a month or longer? What do you think you would see? Would you even care?

I'm tired of others' romanticism regarding my job, and I'm tired of their lack of courage to do anything interesting with their lives. I don't feel sorry for them. I mean, I do feel sorry for them, but it's their own damn fault. They're going to die having never considered the weather, or themselves honestly, or anybody else for that matter, having only experienced rage, politeness, and probably boredom.

I mean, I get bored up here sometimes. Then the silence, which is usually the wind coming from the southwest at 5-15 miles per hour, penetrates my body. I am the same thing as the trees and all of those

rocks, and we are filled up with the silence that says everything. I wonder what others are hearing and what they are saying. But I actually don't care. They are down there doing whatever. And I am up here doing whatever. They are down there, and I am up here. I am up here. Dare anyone to come and find me!

Afternoons can get long. I have been "one" with the sky and the trees for days on end, and I want to say out loud that I am still a human. "You are a tree," I say to a stunted pine, "and I have to make myself lunch." I am jealous of the tree and upset that something not of my own accord has made us different. I crawl back up to the lookout; I fry up some eggs and bacon. I turn on some pop music, and I dance around extravagantly, flailing my right arm around because I can. I take out a pen and paper and write all of this down. All to spite the tree.

I go for walks around the cliffs in the evening, and I am thankful to be human, seeing all of these things. Just now, I walked the goat trails down to my favorite meadow to the southeast. The sun was streaming into the valley over the valerian, paintbrushes, and aster. It was a vibrant mix of shades of light and purple. I looked all around in every direction, and there were no human beings. I felt deep joy at being the only one.