

Field Notes

I lost my notebook. Without it, I'm groundless.

A fire took it. We talk of spark as inspiration, but sometimes that abrupt electricity is the bringer of disaster. Every light has its shadow.

How can I know what I've seen? Memory has flaws: empty spaces where before there was a surface and a unity, like a stretch of paper. The words in the notebook would have told me where I'd been, they were a verbal map and a travel diary. Now there will be whole days unrecorded, unreclected, falling to the ground to be swept up, so many cutout leavings.

You could think of it another way—the self as a river, its memories a fluent water, one that is different every time you step into it.

The unexamined life isn't worth living. Someone said that. And did they leave instructions for what to do if you lose your tool of examination?

Your notebook—your camera—your phone?

Is it possible we become mute and empty now, without the aid of our devices, whether analog or digital?

A sound wakes thought. Recognition dawns: one sense can enliven another. A voice returns to you from beyond the loss. A stringed body, which takes its notes differently, sequences them in foreign geometries, a code but not the kind you crack, more like the kind you have written within you without knowing it, the complex infinities of your cells' DNA.

The order of the natural world, its harmonies and echoes, its jagged beauties, is its own language. It speaks in the graceful, clear bell of the reveal. There is an illumination. An unfolding. Whether or not you feel it is your song, it will be sung. The tones will resonate.

Start over. Start over. Start over.

Those are the lines of the chorus. I'll get a new notebook. What else can I do?