

spaces of grief
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working backwards from today...

spaces of grief

I am writing this
because at some level I
am scared of forgetting
 how to grieve, I am
 scared of forgetting
the inability to ignore
my emotions. Over the
past two years, I have
learned so much about
myself, so much about
 what I am capable of
 overcoming. But, I
 have also learned to
 embrace my sadness,
 my darkness, my
depression, because as
counter-intuitive as
it seems, grief and joy
aren't that different.
They are both intense
and overwhelming and
 all consuming. They
both transform how you
see the world, how you
experience it. Somehow
 there is comfort in
 grief.

Grief doesn't really
qualify as an event or
moment. Though the

one that reminds you
that we are infinite.
Your grief is but a
nanosecond in the
timeline of the Earth.
This boundless space
undermines grief's
power to control you
with its threats of
forever, by reminding
you that you are not
alone -- let the wind
and the grass and the
ants carry your grief
for you.

emotion is connected
to the very physical
reality of losing
someone, it takes
place in a different
dimension -- a
parallel non-physical
universe of loss
that robs you of your
reality and thrusts
you into darkness,
raw and unfiltered.

Every 'Hello' is a
cut, every birdsong
a dagger, every
moment burns with
a deep and stinging
pain. It robs you of
your place, it robs
you of your world,
it robs you of your
autonomy. Grief as a
process is as unique
to each individual
as their fingerprint.

Most of us have
probably heard of the
Kubler-Ross model
of grief -- otherwise
known as the five
stages. Denial.
Anger. Bargaining.
Depression.
Acceptance. The

your singularity. It
allows you to escape
the feeling of being
alone in your
grief, alone in your
experience, alone in
your world. For me,
these spaces are ones
where by reminding
you of how tiny you
are, how you represent
one of millions,
insignificant in the
grand narrative,
somehow the pressure
of going it alone is
lifted. Amongst the
millions of people
on Earth, others are
grieving too. Amongst
the millions of people
on Earth, others
are experiencing
sorrow greater than
yours. Amongst the
millions of people
on Earth, you are
one, but you are
also one. Some might
call this religion,
or spirituality or
a connection to the
universal energy, but
this space is

bus 170, the other day

This seat, in the back corner of a bus, surrounded by empty seats and empty eyes is just another space — not unique but never to exist in the same way again. // Each moment passing, each second further away from the sorrows of the past — bringing relief and despair together. // I see myself reflected in the foggy glass, my right hand a phantom of the left: it moves at the wrong time and it triggers me somehow, my corporeal form replaced with the chthonic rumblings of grief. // I feel it pour out of me, too much to hold, it seeps out filling each nook and cranny, filling the air that I breath, as I melt — I am wasted away, until the bell is rung and my destination lays before me and IT recedes like smoke through the floorboards of my mind.

biggest myth of
grieving, I have
found, is that these
all these things
happen in a seemingly
neat and tidy order.
Or, that they happen
at all. Must I be in
denial before the
anger comes? Can I
ever really accept
this? The five stages
of grief can happen
anywhere and anytime
in any order or
combination. For me
grief has become a
partner in my life,
a sort of new organ,
a new biological
imperative. Sometimes
I forget it's there,
sometimes the world
seems normal, and
then like a growling
stomach or aching
lungs it shouts out
and needs to be
acknowledged, needs
to be fed, needs to
breathe.

My story of grief, this
particular grief,

The final spatial
typology is one that
allows you to overcome

The Boundless Space

a frequency that
will match to your
own and shift the
space to meet your
needs. If you are
American, going to
Mount Rushmore
will perhaps evoke
ideas of grandeur,
of nationalism, of
pride. If you are
Lakota Sioux, it
evokes feelings of
loss, of tragedy, of
hopelessness. In
that sense, these
memorial type spaces
connect you with your
grief, or indeed your
joy, allowing you to
transcend one emotion
into another. You
are bolstered by the
comfort of knowing
you are meant to feel
here -- whatever that
might be.

the circle line @ liverpool street

I get on at Liverpool street: heading east to go west. It is like a hallway with seats along the edge. My seat folds down from the walls of the train. Such strange choices of upholstery: I wonder if it is to hide the dirt. Yellow and red accents. The map of the circle line is above me; the district line map across. Both on the same path but not. It is so cold outside that I don't take my jacket off. Normally I get so sweaty, but I'm chilled to the bone.

is long but fresh.
My father was sick
for many years. His
first brain surgery
happened when my mom
was pregnant with me.
In some ways I never
really met the man
who was my father,
because an event
like that changes you
-- physiologically,
emotionally,
spiritually. But,
for most of my life
his illness sat on
the outskirts of our
lives. Present but
not looming. A storm
off in the distance
behind the tall snow-
capped peaks -- the
surety and permanence
of those mountains
holding back the
howling winds and
biting rain, as they
always have. The
storm always receded,
the mountains always
stood, my dad would
always be there.
But of course, that
couldn't last forever.

we think of spaces
being designed to be
benignly inoffensive. A
hospital is designed
to be neutral, a bank
designed to make
you feel at ease,
an airport to feel
like you could be
anywhere. But, in
fact, things that I
would call memorial
spaces (museums, war
memorials, churches,
large scale art or
landscape designs,
pavilions) are explicit
in their attempt to
evoke. They might
aim to evoke a belief
in a higher spirit, by
making you feel small
and insignificant,
they might evoke
tradition and history,
they might intend to
evoke feelings of joy
or intrigue. Whatever
they mean to evoke,
the fact that they
are meant to evoke
means they become
amplifiers of emotion.
They resonate with

the dressing room @ the shaw theatre:

Down the stairs, past the lobby restrooms through a wooden door that says "STAFF". Through a vestibule. Past a practice piano. It is lit with fluorescent lights that flicker slightly. I'm the first one here. It is as cold down here as it is outside. The other dressing rooms are empty except for the piles of clothing: costumes without the characters. My chair is the last one on the wall across from the door. The left set of lights doesn't work. The right one does. I turn all the mirror lights on. Concrete walls, linoleum floor. Aluminum framed chairs with blue upholstery. The speaker crackles a bit. I hear the stage crew up stairs.

And eventually, two
years ago this spring,
the storm came. And
it ripped me from
my foundation. And
it sent me ass over
ears into the violent
churning winds at the
centre of a hurricane.
Up was down. Near was
far. The world before
me was shredded and
blown into dust, and
for days and weeks,
the wind just kept
howling, the dust
never settled. Then
one day I realised
that though the winds
whipped at my face, I
could, if just for one
pure second, breathe
again. And then,
another day I thought
I felt solid ground
under my feet, just
for a moment, I could
touch down on the
earth before being
sucked up again --
but, in that moment I
saw the potential for
another moment and
another,

I think we rarely
think about the impact
that architecture has
on emotions. We are
rarely asked to design
a space for laughter
or joy or worry. More
often

The Memorial Space

the normal plane of
existence, and will
inevitably return to it
when you step off the
bus or train or plane.
But, not only that,
as a journey travels
through time, it
serves as a reminder,
or marker, of every
minute, day, month
that passes from when
you last had them in
your life. It points
out the inevitable
fact that one day your
grief will lessen, your
pain will numb, and
somehow that seems
a loss as well. It, in
some ways, allows you
to grieve your grief.

and somewhere down
the line there would
be fewer moments
of wind driven rain
and howling winds
and thunder shaking
my bones. And then
eventually I learned
how to right myself
in the tempest, how
to move, how to walk
against the wind, and
I could even imagine
the winds slowing
down, no longer a
wicked storm but a
gentle breeze. Yet,
I know that it isn't
a question of if the
cyclone will return,
but when.

Some days you just
can't move. Some days
you are just paralyzed
by the realisation
they are gone. It
might not have been
anything in particular
that set you off.

Its not a holiday or
anniversary. Their
favourite song didn't
play on the radio; you

are existing alongside
temporal space, you
in that physical and
time of the journey,
ends. During that
when the journey
because it must end
and is evaporated
this, attack of grief,
The fear of when will
spaces to grieve.
fruitful and inherent
makes them such
boundedness that
it is this temporal
but temporally. And,
not just physically
inherently bounded
journeying spaces are
unlike most places,
spatially,
grounding dumping
most successful and
of journeying my
come to find spaces
and Gretel. I have
emotional Hansel
like some perverse
trail of it behind you
by grain, leaving a
bursts, or grain
in those terrifyingly
either by the pound
below you. You do so

my shower:

A white shower curtain from IKEA with colorful geometric shapes. A grimy tub basin surrounded by dull white tiles. Two hanging baskets of products. A sponge shaped like a pineapple. Two exfoliating mittens. My razor. Her razor. Dove body wash. Bull dog face wash. Aussie brand shampoo and conditioner for curly hair. Many more bottles. An anti-fogging mirror that both fogs and is too high up to use. I stare at the dying ivy. Hot water cascades down my back, I find relief in the water — it flows and so do I. I remember that water leaks through the cracks between the tub and the wall sometimes, but it is replaced by water — I'm coursing through the river now.

my bed @ my flat in battersea:

My mattress is on a box spring, nestled into the corner of my room. Sitting halfway in front of the floor to ceiling height window. The top part is open, cold air rushes in. The radiator is at the foot of the bed; it is warm but not hot. My sheets are white with thin grey stripes. The pillowcase is wet with tears, and there are crumbs in the duvet from my snacking. The plants on the wall across from me move slightly from the rising heat. On the dresser next to me are three burning candles in front of my altar. A mirror. Pictures of my grandfather, my dad, of me, of the family. Rocks from Utah. A crystal. My morfars wedding ring. My Saami knife. The residual scent of burning sage sticks to my pillow, as I wrap myself deeper in a cocoon of despair.

aren't eating their
favourite cereal.
You might wake up
being crushed by the
infinite weight of
loss and longing. You
might be walking down
the street, or at the
store, or on a bus, or
a museum. Sometimes
all you can do is
wrap yourself up: in
blankets and food and
tears and despair.
You wrap yourself up
and try your hardest
just to exist, too
tired to cry, to sad
to sleep. Floating in
the nothingness of
mourning, brought on
by the sun shining
or the rustling of
leaves or nothing
at all. And, while
emotions don't have
a physical presence,
and while they aren't
necessarily something
you can control, it
seems like the mind
finds a way to tie
emotions to space, to
tie grief to spatial

In some ways grief
seems like an
immovable object --
it weighs you down
and makes it hard
to move on. But, it
is a contradictory
existence. It feels
impossible to leave
it behind because it
follows you wherever
you go. In that sense
it is a transitory
experience. Because
of its ubiquity, its
endless assault on our
day to day, we tend to
push it back and push
it back. You either
ending up breaking
down violently, sucked
into the infinite,
or you find ways to
lighten your load.
It gries follows you
around, it follows you
like a sand bag tied
to your back as you
try to swim to shore.
So any way you can
try to offload some
of the burden so you
don't sink into the
murky depths

experience, to allow for different reasons to grieve in different spaces. The connection between the space you are in and how and why it allows you to grieve is a profound one.

Instead of trying to define my grief by typology of experience, I have begun to notice and define my grief by a typology of site. It isn't the anger, or depression, or acceptance that is changing. It is the space you are in. This project aims to express the connection I have experienced between certain types of spaces and being able to grieve: the personal space, the public space, the journeying space, the memorial space, and the boundless space.

This essay

The Journeying Space

normal, or quotidian, became a bounded space to grieve for no reason. To allow the random welling up of emotion that happens, to happen. The juxtaposition of everyone else going on with their lives evokes the knowledge that you loved one who will never go to a grocery store again, or get their hair cut, or do a million other things that go along with being alive. This segmented spatiality of the public sphere, of the inherent rules, of the inherent not wanting to attract too much attention, turned public space into the place where you left a just a touch of pressure so the whole thing doesn't blow up in your face.

the train from smedstorp to copenhagen:

This fucking train always destroys me. I have to leave behind my family, the whispers of my heritage, the wide open sky so big and expansive it feels like it will crush you alive. Where is Atlas when you need him. To hold up the sky so I can breathe.

the minneslund at borrrby cemetery:

Their names aren't even written on a stone. The sign says something like 'In Memory of All Those We Have Lost'. I'm tired of losing people, sometimes I don't think I have any tears left. On this day nothing came out, but somehow I feel worse. We light the candle and go on our way the frozen gravel crunching beneath our boots.

the gatwick express:

Seated, the newspaper un-folded perfectly in the curve of my thighs. The faces on the page — still, unmoving, stare back but don't see. Am I being seen by the people around me. Alone and yet surrounded we travel through the eerie pre-dawn world. My neighbor on the train close enough to touch, close enough to feel the warmth of his body, close enough to smell his scent — musty, old, human. But what do they see? A man with his newspaper, a boy reading, a child without his father. To them, he is just another passenger in this space-less space. Together they are humanity — linked by so much; separated by so little. But some times a little is more than so much. Because emotions might simultaneously fill the space the width of an un-folded newspaper or that of an entire train.

will describe how and why these kinds of spaces have allowed me to grieve and will be surrounded by and interspersed with short vignettes of the individual spaces of grief.

The Personal Space

I suppose it would seem logical that one's personal space is the place you can grieve, or explore your emotions, the most freely. Its true that in your shower you feel free to sing your heart out regardless of if it is any good, in your bedroom you can strip off your clothes and the mask you wear around other people, on your couch you can watch a program and eat a tub of ice cream without having to worry about being

to ask if the confused tourist needs help finding their way. But still, I can't say that I would have guessed I'd feel comfortable crying in public. But, sometime after my dad's death, especially right in the beginning when the presence of his loss was all consuming and inescapable, I learned to let the tears come whenever they came. I needed to alleviate the pressure behind my eyes or I would collapse when I got home. Those public spaces became a forum for me to feel sad, quietly but strongly, surrounded by the rest of humanity. Not requiring them to acknowledge me verbally or approach me in anyway, having other people around, or at least being in a place that is

vallby church:

The ancient stones aren't keeping out the chill, because the chill isn't from the snow or howling winds off the Baltic. The chill is longing, the chill is grief, the chill is deep in the empty spot in my soul that can't ever be filled.

the asda @ clapham junction:

The store is massive, even oppressive in its scale. Row after row, aisle after aisle. Everything you could ever need should be found here. The repetition, the hollowness of space, the inauthenticity of light at air — all a manufactured experience. I got lost in the mundane, I get tangled in the quotidian, I am surprised I was able to get out of bed: yet now I am here, and I am so overwhelmed by the prospect, I just want to run. I can't imagine smiling at the cashier. A claustrophobic oxymoron.

judged for what you do. And while that might be true, I have found it, in many ways, to be the hardest place to grieve. It isn't so hard for the grief to be accessed, but it is hard to take the risk to full embrace it. It doesn't seem right, how can your 'safe space' be the place you feel least safe, most scared about delving into your emotions. From a spatial perspective your inner sanctum protects you because it isolates you from the world, it allows you to be yourself with out fear of how the world will react. but it is that same disconnection from the world that in turn makes your grief a terrifying prospect. My bouts of grief in my private spaces have felt almost

If private space is where you'd expect the most freedom to grieve, public space would naturally be the opposite. We are trained, in most societies, from a young age that we don't show our emotions in public. Too happy or too sad, anything outside the neutral middle of stares and murmurs from your fellow citizens trying to blend into their average day. I often find myself pushing the limits of what is acceptable public behaviour, at least in the UK. I talk excitedly on the bus to my friends, I chat with strangers in the queue, or stop

The Public Space

momentary when the grief seems infinite.

the airport in copenhagen:

A heterotopia of time. I've been reading too much Foucault. But that seems appropriate. Existing within, alongside and without. A spaceless space. The spatial manifestation of numb. I can exist without existing, I am my own doppelgänger.

the train from ystad to malmö:

Journeying allows grief because the journey has to stop: and that means the grief can't last forever. The minute the train starts to pull away from the station I feel brave enough to cry.

ales stenar:

Every time I come here I tap into the history in my cells. A stone ship. An oval of 59 stones. 1,400 to 5,500 years old. How many hands of touched these stone? How many fires have burnt at the pyre? How many loved ones lost to war, famine and old age? How many dances under the full moon? The sheep graze here as they have since the beginning. The continuity of history. The comfort that it all moves on. The ashes scattered on the wind.

violent. Alone. All
I feel is alone in my
grief, reminded that
I am the only one who
can feel my feelings.

In this isolated
space a minute of
mourning can feel like
a day, time stands
eerily still and I
always feel like it
will never end. It is
like the ouroboros,
the ancient symbol
depicting a serpent
eating its own tail
-- being alone allows
you to feel alone, it
reminds you are alone,
you've lost someone,
and no one else can
help you. I am often
scared to grieve
alone, in my private
space without someone
else nearby who could
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I almost immediately
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vallby church:

First built in the 12th century. White plaster covers the stones, some of them older than America. I have family in the cemetery, some whose names I know. One who lays inside. Hexagonal terracotta tiles on the floor. A glittering blue sky is painted on the ceiling between the vaults. Highlights of gold and dark wood. The echoes of voices reverberate on the walls. The air holds a certain sanctity, a lens to focus inwards

björkhaga, on the stairs:

I sit on the steep dark staircase in my grandparent's farmhouse: the little museum to found objects, to heirlooms, to tools of trade. Things always on display but coasted in a perpetual layer of memory. Fingerprints in the thick fluffy powder remain from days and months past. // A squeaky pair of shears. An empty oil lamp with a long-since-charred wick. A brass mortar and pestle reflecting the soft light. A stone axe made by hands only just human. Woven flax, hair-like and fine, plaited by a grandmother many times great. // These objects reflect my heritage, my soul, my face. My grandfather's creased and weathered hands. My grandmother's buoyant chuckle. The smells of must, age and cooking meat mixed into one. // The mice in the walls tell our stories too. To them we are giants, we are myth. // These objects watched the stories of this house. Bombs in the distance. A body hanging in the barn. The laughter of five generations. Years of spilt milk. // Don't underestimate the power of reflection in brass. It reflects your face, your soul, your sorrow. All slightly changed and tarnished with use and memory.

the 170 bus:

I step onto the bus. Press my oyster card against the reader and move to the back — as I always do. Weighed down with a week's worth of groceries: I feel busy, run down, tired. So tired. The moment my weary body makes contact with the seat I feel a weight behind my eyes. //CLAPHAM JUNCTION STATION: FALCON ROAD // The sound of the rustling bags, a solitary cough, a woman and her child. I simultaneously retreat and break through. //CLAPHAM JUNCTION STATION: GRANT ROAD // Like channelling a spirit — I exhale deeply, making room inside me. Making space for this takeover: an emotional coup d'état. I have no choice. //WAYLAND ROAD ESTATE // No movement, no blubbering lips. Just a stoic face with wet hot tears running down its cheeks // WALLIS CLOSE // My dad used to cry a lot. Not from fear or pain or worry — at least not in the beginning. But from pride and joy and love. // YORK GARDENS // I cry because I have to let the poison out. // BATTERSEA HIGH STREET // I cry for all these people, for all they have lost, for all they have yet to lose. // SUNBURY LANE // I cry because on this bus I am alone. Yet, on this bus I am surrounded. I cry because grief has different rules: it has no program; it has no space; it fills a space if you let it. // PARKGATE ROAD // I step off the bus, as if woken from a dream. That's not me; that stays behind. Soon this bus will be filled with ghosts. Ghosts of my grief left behind as an artefact.

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temple church:

£3 to get in. Just two coins. 12th century Purbeck Marble, in a round. Cream coloured Caen limestone, the box within it sits. You can almost hear the chisels reverberate off the stone. It's a few degrees colder in here than outside. It is quieter too. I trace my fingers around the perimeter of the church. The ridges on my fingers trying to absorb the history. I try to find a place to sit. The tourists are profane. This place is a vortex of stillness. I wander up to the rafters. I find myself hugging a column. First come tears, then come stifled sobs, then comes laughter. Providing scaffolding within its walls, a place to come and let what is in out.

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The Journeying Space

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public space, the
personal space, the
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experience, to

driving back from crestline:

This migraine pain and nausea I've been feeling from the barometric pressure change, from coming down the mountain literally and figuratively, is like an emotional cleanse. It's like the torrential floods of snowmelt in the Sierras, the purging burns of a lightning strike in the redwood forest that burns and bites, but leaves behind enriched soil and helps the pine cones to spread their seeds. I'm open, I'm raw, and that can only be a good thing. I'm moving into my next stage in life, I'm so blessed to be feeling, because what would be more terrifying, more excruciating, more claustrophobic than to be numb or unaware. But I honor these tumult, like a raft floating on an azure sea, I can't fight the waves but submit myself to the path they take me on.

in my bedroom:

*Grey walls that used to be bright green. The coolness of
the walls doesn't betray the triple digit heat outside. The
striped pillowcase stained wet and wrinkled. I squeeze,
holding on for dear life. The house is too quiet. My heart
is too loud.*

In some ways grief
seems like an
immovable object --
it weighs you down
and makes it hard
to move on. But, it
is a contradictory
existence. It feels
impossible to leave
it behind because it
follows you wherever
you go. In that sense
it is a transitory
experience. Because
of its ubiquity, its
endless assault on our
day to day, we tend to
push it back and push
it back. You either
ending up breaking
down violently, sucked
into the infinite,
or you find ways to
lighten your load.
If grief follows you
around, it follows you
like a sand bag tied
to your back as you
try to swim to shore.
So any way you can you
try to offload some
of the burden so you
don't sink into the
murky depths

aren't eating their
favourite cereal.
You might wake up
being crushed by the
infinite weight of
loss and longing. You
might be walking down
the street, or at the
store, or on a bus, or
a museum. Sometimes
all you can do is
wrap yourself up in
blankets and food and
tears and despair.
You wrap yourself up
and try your hardest
just to exist, too
tired to cry, to sad
to sleep. Floating in
the nothingness of
mourning, brought on
by the sun shining
or the rustling of
leaves or nothing
at all. And, while
emotions don't have
a physical presence,
and while they aren't
necessarily something
you can control, it
seems like the mind
finds a way to tie
emotions to space, to
to grief to spatial

while landing at lax:

*Sitting in a cramped seat. Dreary with days of travel.
The pit of my stomach rises as we descend. The city lays
before us blinking in the darkness. A mould of streets, of
bungalows, of Starbucks consuming the land in its ever
hungry maw. Beautiful in its profanity. Filled to the brim
but empty. This is my first time coming back now that he
is gone.*

in the negev desert:

This place of howling winds, of baking heat, of glittering stars is haunted by the voices of our ancestors, bouncing off the canyon walls, calling our names. Sitting in a circle under the light of the moon we shared out truths and bared our souls. To be here finally, the joy that I picture on his face is the most painful thing in the world.

below you. You do so
either by the pound
in those terrifying
bursts, or grain
by grain, leaving a
trail of it behind you
like some perverse
emotional Hansel
and Gretel. I have
come to find spaces
of journeying my
most successful and
fulfilling dumping
grounds. Spatially,
unlike most places,
journeying spaces are
inherently bounded
-- not just physically
but temporally. And,
it is this temporal
boundedness that
makes them such
fruitful and inherent
spaces to grieve.
The fear of when will
this 'attack of grief'
end is evaporated
because it must end
when the journey
ends. During that
time of the journey,
in that physical and
temporal space, you
are existing alongside

and somewhere down
the line there would
be fewer moments
of wind driven rain
and howling winds
and thunder shaking
my bones. And then
eventually I learned
how to right myself
in the tempest, how
to move, how to walk
against the wind, and
I could even imagine
the winds slowing
down, no longer a
wicked storm but a
gentle breeze. Yet,
I know that it isn't
a question of if the
cyclone will return,
but when.

Some days you just
can't move. Some days
you are just paralyzed
by the realization
they are gone. It
might not have been
anything in particular
that set you off.
It's not a holiday or
anniversary. Their
favourite song didn't
play on the radio, you

the normal plane of
existence, and will
inevitably return to it
when you step off the
bus or train or plane.

But, not only that,
as a journey travels
through time, it
serves as a reminder,
or marker, of every
minute, day, month
that passes from when
you last had them in
your life. It points
out the inevitable
fact that one day your
grief will lessen, your
pain will numb, and
somehow that seems
a loss as well. It, in
some ways, allows you
to grieve your grief.

The Memorial Space

I think we rarely
think about the impact
that architecture has
on emotions. We are
rarely asked to design
a space for laughter
or joy or worry. More
often

And eventually, two
years ago this spring,
the storm came. And
it ripped me from
my foundation. And
it sent me ass over
ears into the violent
churning winds at the
centre of a hurricane.
Up was down. Near was
far. The world before
me was shredded and
blown into dust, and
for days and weeks,
the wind just kept
howling, the dust
never settled. Then
one day I realised
that though the winds
whipped at my face, I
could, if just for one
pure second, breathe
again. And then,
another day I thought
I felt solid ground
under my feet, just
for a moment, I could
touch down on the
earth before being
sucked up again --
but, in that moment I
saw the potential for
another moment and
another,

the waiting wall in jersusalem:

*The Kotel. The Wall of al-Buraq. The Western and
Waiting Wall. The holiest of holies. Caper bushes grow
out of the spaces between the stones, stuffed in amongst
the notes, prayers, and tears of generations. To be here
amongst these foundational blocks, this ruined wall, this
energy laden place speaks to the resiliency of our people,
the weight of our history, the tragedy of our story. I stand
where generations of Jews dreamed of standing, where my
father once stood. Embracing each other we sing, pray,
dance, laugh, love and cry — grief and joy to sides of the
same coin.*

on marsh's couch:

I walk up the curved driveway. Open the metal screen door with the tattered paper sign on it. The door to her office is open. I sit down on the plush overstuffed couch. She sits across from me smiling. Her smile drives me to tears. She sits there in silence as I let go. Hours seem to pass, but I can finally catch my breath — I stabilize. She looks back at me and says 'Ok, lets get started.' Within these walls, within this hour I can embrace all that overwhelms me, and leave it behind in piles of tissue on the floor.

in my car on the street @ home:

A grey Hyundai Elantra. The front passenger door a different colour. The inside still smells like my grandma no matter how much I air it out. She sticks to each fibre of fabric, each molecule of plastic with the tenacity she had in life. For seemingly no reason I can't bring myself to start the car. I sit in the driveway for ages. The sounds outside muffled by the glass and aluminium. The world outside seems to bright, too loud. I lean the driver's seat all the way back. I breathe as goose bumps race over my flesh. I feel it building up behind my eyes. Its just one of those days.

*Frigid mountain water trickles past. The sound of birds.
A donkey brays in the distance. Mottled sunlight piercing
through the trees onto the leaf littered ground. I take off
all my clothes, stripped of everything, I dive into the cold
water. My breath escapes me, and in the moment I feel
free. Too cold to cry, no air to scream. A mikvah in the
woods to cleanse your soul.*

bathing in the river in monticello amata:

I lay on the floor walling into the darkness. An
uncontrollable force pulling my grief out of every
cell. I thought I was giving it space before, I thought
I was being honest and true and letting my emotions
fill the space they needed. I cried for 3 hours. Cries
of despondent grief, cries of the agony of loss. I heard
myself like a dying animal in the distance. For those few
hours I was grief and my grief was me. At the end, when
the grief still poured out but I was too tired to make
noise, too dehydrated for tears, to weak to slam my fists
onto the floor, I cried soundless, tearless, motionless,
until I fell asleep fragile as a naked babe laid down in
the woods.

ayahuasca ceremony :

the train from pisa to grosseto:

Sometimes the most painful thing is a happy memory.

we think of spaces being designed to be benign inoffensive. A hospital is designed to be neutral, a bank designed to make you feel at ease, an airport to feel like you could be anywhere. But, in fact, things that I would call memorial spaces (museums, war memorials, churches, large scale art or landscape designs, pavilions) are explicit in their attempt to evoke. They might aim to evoke a belief in a higher spirit, by making you feel small and insignificant, they might evoke tradition and history, they might intend to evoke feelings of joy or intrigue. Whatever they mean to evoke, the fact that they are meant to evoke means they become amplifiers of emotion. They resonate with

is long but fresh. My father was sick for many years. His first brain surgery happened when my mom was pregnant with me. In some ways I never really met the man who was my father, because an event like that changes you -- physiologically, emotionally, spiritually. But, for most of my life his illness sat on the outskirts of our lives. Present but not looming. A storm off in the distance behind the tall snow-capped peaks -- the surety and permanence of those mountains holding back the howling winds and biting rain, as they always have. The storm always receded, the mountains always stood, my dad would always be there. But of course, that couldn't last forever.

a frequency that will match to your own and shift the space to meet your needs. If you are American, going to Mount Rushmore will perhaps evoke ideas of grandeur, of nationalism, of pride. If you are Lakota Sioux, it evokes feelings of loss, of tragedy, of hopelessness. In that sense, these memorial type spaces connect you with your grief, or indeed your joy, allowing you to transcend one emotion into another. You are bolstered by the comfort of knowing you are meant to feel here -- whatever that might be.

The Boundless Space

The final spatial typology is one that allows you to overcome

My story of grief, this particular grief, breathes. needs to be fed, needs to be acknowledged, needs to be and needs to be out lungs it shouts out stomach or aching then like a growling seems normal, and sometimes the world I forget it's there, sometimes. Sometimes a new biological a sort of new organ, partner in my life, grief has become a combination. For me in any order or anywhere and anytime of grief can happen this? The five stages ever really accept anger comes? Can I denial before the at all. Must I be in Or, that they happen neat and tidy order. happen in a seemingly all these things found, is that these grieving, I have biggest myth of

on a bench in alicante, with rosie:

I found shelter on a bench. My grief ripped through me like
a rusted blade through flesh — ragged edges flapping in
the breeze, even just a touch of wind sending the burning
smart of pain coursing through me. But, I was awoken. My
emotions flowed out and in and rushed like a raging river.
// To find someone and feel like they just understand that
you don't even need words is a beautiful and terrifying
thing. The connection was so pure, so honest, and rich. In
her arms I feel safer than I have in a long time. // I threw
my head back, looked into the vast sky above and felt my
soul — my fears, my joys, my emotions pulled through
my throat in choking sobs. // It took a stranger, but an old
friend, to remind me that I'm standing here, I'm living: to
feel. // But, how can it hurt this bad? My tears burn with
such deep grief, yet at the same time make me so happy.
Happy that I can feel again, honestly and true. Grief or joy,
pain or love, let me feel again and let the numbness fade
into the darkness. //

in the ocean in alicante:

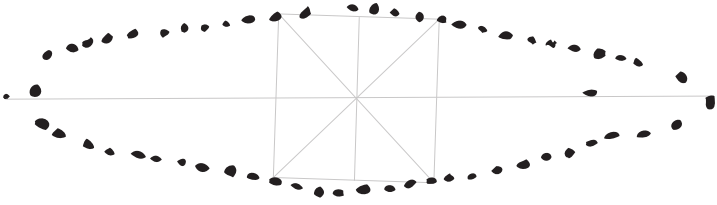
Floating in the sea. The salty waves keep me aloft. I close my eyes and let myself be rocked and pulled. I exist only here. I exist only now. A drop in a mighty ocean, a singular grain of sand. But instead of being terrified of my insignificance I am uplifted. A part of a multitude. One of many. Not alone but surrounded.

walking down the street in alicante:

As I walk down these streets — I am alone. As if I had never realised before — I am alone. Surrounded by people, within arms reach — I am alone. Yes, I am alone because I am travelling alone, but I am alone because he is gone. He isn't coming back. I can't share these photos or stories with him. A city is a place for the living, but all I can think about are the dead.

ales stenar:

*Each stone vibrates with the tremendous weight of
history. My hands placed in the same smooth relief as my
ancestors. A stony ship that knows the journey through
life.*



your singularity. It allows you to escape the feeling of being alone -- alone in your grief, alone in your experience, alone in your world. For me, these spaces are ones where by reminding you of how tiny you are, how you represent one of millions, insignificant in the grand narrative, somehow the pressure of going it alone is lifted. Amongst the millions of people on Earth, others are grieving too. Amongst the millions of people on Earth, others are experiencing sorrow greater than yours. Amongst the millions of people on Earth, you are one, but you are also one. Some might call this religion, or spirituality or a connection to the universal energy, but this space is

emotion is connected to the very physical reality of losing someone, it takes place in a different dimension -- a parallel non-physical universe of loss that robs you of your reality and thrusts you into darkness, raw and unfiltered. Every 'Hello' is a cut, every birdsong a dagger, every moment burns with a deep and stinging pain. It robs you of your place, it robs you of your world, it robs you of your autonomy. Grief as a process is as unique to each individual as their fingerprint. Most of us have probably heard of the Kubler-Ross model of grief -- otherwise known as the five stages. Denial. Anger. Bargaining. Depression. The Acceptance.

the garden @ björkhaga:

Laying in the freshly mowed grass. All I can see is the sky above me and the bushes around me, somewhere behind me beyond my sight sits the old stone building. I got lost in the sky. The warmth of the sun, the buzzing in the air. I cry. I cry just to let the pressure out, cradled in the damp musty bosom of the earth. The sun on my face dries my tears. Each blade of grass supporting me. Each leaf helping me breathe. I cry, because of the beauty of the connection to it all — through the sadness I find unification, I don't have to hold this on my own.

the train to ystad:

A purple Fågaråg. One an hour. The screen says its warm outside, there are activities happening in Lund and Malmö. We sit three people in a place for four. That empty seat deafening in it's silence. The green fields, and villages pass by the window. Somewhere past Oxie I begin to cry. We are here without him. He loved this place. He would be crying too.

my shower:

*Pink and grey tiles from the 1940s. My forehead pressed
against them, cool to the touch. Hot water, almost boiling.
I breathe in the steam. Half empty bottles of eucalyptus
scented shampoo. A slowly rusting razor. A bar of soap
melting into the tiles. The hot water cleansing more
than my skin. Just one more minute, or 5, or 20.*

sitting in traffic:

As I come to a stop behind an endless sea of red and yellow lights, I am stuck in this frozen time. Neither leaving or arriving. Alone in the driver's seat I am overcome. Sobs, a heaving chest. I turn down the radio to listen to my forlorn orchestrations. Terrified of a never-ending crescendo, the car ahead of me begins to move, and the grief passes — a fleeting sonata.

one that reminds you
that we are infinite.

Your grief is but a
nanosecond in the
timeline of the Earth.

This boundless space
undermines grief's
power to control you
with its threats of
forever, by reminding
you that you are not
alone -- let the wind
and the grass and the
ants carry your grief
for you.

Grief doesn't really
qualify as an event or
moment. Though the

I am writing this
because at some level I
am scared of forgetting
how to grieve, I am
scared of forgetting
the inability to ignore
my emotions. Over the
past two years, I have
learned so much about
myself, so much about
what I am capable of
overcoming. But, I
have also learned to
embrace my sadness,
my darkness, my
depression, because as
counter-intuitive as
it seems, grief and joy
aren't that different.
They are both intense
and overwhelming and
all consuming. They
both transform how you
see the world, how you
experience it. Somehow
there is comfort in
grief.

spaces of grief

camp hess kramer, memorial:

I am the man of the house now. I must hold myself together. Not because men shouldn't cry, I was raised by the best example of how sensitive a man can be. I must hold myself together because I fear that if I don't my being will be shredded into infinitesimal bits. My body and being whipped up into the ocean breeze, carried on the songs of birds. // Standing atop the promontory, looking out over the Pacific Ocean, the sun shining, birds singing, gentle breeze blowing we try to celebrate a life, not mourn a loss. Laughter and tears mix together into a salty sweet mixture that coats my soul. But letting you go is the first step in remembering you are no longer here. //

Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'mei raba balma di-
v'ra chirutei, v'yamilich malchutei b'chayeichon
uvyomeichon uvchayei d'chol bett yisrael, baagala
uvizmankariv, v'imru: "amen." Y'hei sh'mei
raba m'varach l'alum ul'almei almay. Yitbarach
v'yishtabach, v'yitparar v'yitromam
v'yitnasseh, v'yithadad v'yit'aleh v'yit'halal sh'mei
d'kuad'sha, b'rich hu, leila min-kol-birchata v'shirata,
tushb'chata v'nechemata da'amirran balma, v'imru:
"amen." Y'hei sh'lama raba min-sh'maya v'chayim
aleinu val-kol-yisrael, v'imru: "amen." Oseh shalom
bimromav, hu y'asseh shalom aleinu
val kol-yisrael, v'imru: "amen." //

everywhere:

*Hold me, don't touch me. Ask me how I'm doing, leave
me alone. Feed me, I'm not hungry. Tuck me in, I can't
sleep. Leave me alone, don't go I'm scared of the dark.*

everywhere:

When will it stop. When will it stop. When will it stop.

everywhere:

working forwards from the beginning...

spaces of grief
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