



Oblivion, photographed by David Maisel

I wake up in the morning with a shift of the lights. As the flickering, yellow lights fade into the day, the soft, warm sunlight pours in, bit by bit, and my body starts to move, stretching, into a brand new day. Again, I am brought to life. My heart, a cluster of intertwined veins and arteries, becomes alive as the mobile cells travel through, and I feel the animation of my own body, propelled not by me but by what is within.

Let me expand on that since one seldom gets to hear the voice of an organism like me. Unlike how you may picture a conventional heart, mine does not pump physically. It serves as the center of my body—a series of pathways that connect to different parts of my body and allow various matters to travel through. For instance, look at that little blue car approaching this central hub. I recognize it from yesterday, the day before, even before that perhaps, and so on. It passes here every single weekday around this hour, traveling from the outskirts of my body to the heart of activities, but right now, it is stuck on the pathway, unable to move even an inch. I cannot help with that. No one has the capacity to stop such a malfunction within themselves from happening. I am rather used to this happening anyway—the jamming of all kinds of materials as they attempt to travel across my body—so I decide to just wait it out.

A sea of cars clumps at my heart, the waves of red lights freeze in motion, and sirens play cacophony like a poorly trained symphony. I sigh with the chilly morning wind, a breath of coldness and resignation, and turn my attention to the surrounding veins.

The streets—shadowed by the crowds of tall buildings—are the symphony's audience—those ones who would never learn to quiet themselves down during a performance. At least, that is what I have always imagined. I am not entirely against such audience noises, however, for even the most disassembled sound would be more pleasing to the ear than the disjointed cadence of the car sirens. Now, it is already well into the morning: a time when the breakfast shops along the sidewalks become the absolute stars of the streets, especially if their owners decide to stand at the door and yell to advertise their place. People are clotting these sidewalks, walking in and out, along and across the streets. They flow messily, occasionally bumping into each other but always quick to pick up the pace again, dodging around the currents of heads and bodies.

Among such currents is a teenage girl in a yellow collared shirt and a pleated skirt—a school uniform—and her ponytail is swinging behind her back as she navigates around the moving clots of people. I recognize her, too, but she is running a bit late today compared to the norm. Now, she is running toward the nearest subway station. It is quieter down there, but I feel them as well, and for that, they dive deeper into my flesh. I feel the trains swinging back and forth between destinations, the coldness of the stations' recorded announcements, and the dreadfulness of those who hold onto the rails while staring down at their phone with the emptiest expressions.

Something different catches my eye. An older woman holds her dachshund puppy against her chest as she moves up from the subway station and finds herself at the exit to the central park—what I consider as my lungs. Let me clarify: I deem it as lungs because it is the only block of greenery near the center of my body, and it is supposed to supply nearby buildings and industries with some fresh air. Like lungs. The woman puts a leash around the puppy's neck, and the little dachshund is eager to sniff the grass, trees, and flowers—plants that emanate the smell of raw nature, mixed with the taint of gasoline exhaust as cars run around the area.

My gaze moves down to the port—my stomach. Nearly every day, ships would come to supply my body with new goods. As they approach along with the fluids and move the container boxes onto the land, I engulf what is in there, take it into my body, and allow the

micro-organisms within me to decide what they wish to do with these goods and thus digest them.

These happen every day. From day to night. My body's working nonstop, and those within me propel themselves, leaving marks on my infrastructural body. Everything repeats.

I lose track of time until the sun begins to plunge down into the horizon, and again, I see that little blue car driving along the jams of traffic. It moves toward where it comes from, the outskirts. As the vehicle travels, the traffic around it lessens, and the car enters this area where even the street lamp lights are dim. That is where the true greeneries breathe, together and in harmony, in a quiet, soothing tone.

My limbs, fingers, and toes fall into quiet darkness, but my heart dreams in the stars of yellow light, blinking against the bleakness of the night.

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