

Writing | Symposium 2022

By Sarah Rockwood

If you frame it in this certain way

You shake. You shudder. So raw with sadness that you're happy.
Not the happy kind of happy.
The trigger kind.
The shot that steals your one shot at life kind.

You sit on the summit, one of many undulations.
You strain to lift your leaden head.
Your ocular orbs savor the parakeet hills, the emerald oaks.
It's marvelous, even through these tear-stained windows.
Life is marvelous. You can see it. You can see it.
You know it's true and always will be, long after our beings be gone.
But you can't feel it.
You can't see *yourself* in it anymore.
Not in five years. Not tomorrow. Not now.
You hear a shot. But no echo.
The shudders deepen.

If you wrote it down on paper, the list would be long.
The reasons to live.
They tell you your life must be so amazing.
That you are so amazing.
That life is amazing.

And it's amazing that you know it's true but feel
it's empty.

Don't cut your list short.

Just try to keep writing.

The trees stand tall in solidarity. They also sit beneath you, seat you.

Your hands clutch the edge. Don't let go.

You feel the grains flowing in parallel.

Are they grains? Or just lines now? Just seeds sprouted from rains?

You are no arborist, but something tells you that the oaks around you have a kinship with the
one beneath you.

And if you tore apart the planks and pieced them back together

So that the four edges became four corners

So that they become a portal, a window to the world, a new perspective

Then maybe you could start to see

That death is just one really bad day

When framed in this certain way

Between all the living

And something new.

But you'll have your shot at that novelty another day.

Just keep writing your novel on this one.