What Is To Be Done

On deactivated bodies and what can come next

Deep Strawberry

2026

I would walk
toward the water

but here, I walk away from the pollution. The city has been restructured by waves of whiteness. I reorient my senses. The sense that draws me to water is hard to describe, what sense is this sense? Something about the light, light on water, what is the sense that orients to the tone of the light? Something about far vision, the sense of wanting to see the horizon. It's a skin sense too, the desire to touch moisture particles. And a proprioceptive sense, to want to be near something moving, to want to move with what's moving, to want to learn how to be in motion, to be entrained, the desire to be entrained with the waves. The desire to be with. A communal sense. A social sense. Attachment. To seek out vision, attachment, motion, a sense of being with. To be with water.

IF I WALK TOWARD THE WATER, I walk toward the port, one of the largest ports on the coast. If I walk towards the port, I walk into the trucks lined up to deliver goods to be loaded onto boats that cross every sea. Idling trucks spew diesel into the air. The neighborhood is bordered by two perpendicular perimeters, two highways over which the trucks roll, surrounding a neighborhood acclimatized to exhaust. The port is a diamond in this band of highway, functional, mighty, gigantic, set upon the sparkling water. Star Wars sized machinery works constantly while we sleep, as we make dinner half a mile away. This is the movement of capital. This movement spews pollution, so I override my sense to walk toward water by consulting my sense of moisture, nostrils dry, lungs dry. Instead I walk the other way into the streets toward my neighbors.

I WALK AWAY FROM THE WATER, away from the pollution into the flora of the streets, the neighborhood's secret structure. Wild flowers arc, grow ridiculously abundant. Not many people manicure their yards, things are allowed to grow, and it being Mediterranean climate, lots of things grow. I walk through the sun. I feel a tiny kiss of water at the edges of my aura. I pick honeysuckle, flowering rosemary, a long stem with magenta bells. I will make a bouquet. Coming up Willow between 11th and 12th, I walk behind a woman, I am about to overtake her on the left. She does not seem aware of me on the sidewalk, so I try to make my presence heard. I have my earbuds in, I'm listening to a podcast, obsessed lately with astrology podcasts, not really believing in this system, not necessarily disbelieving it either, obsessed with the concept of time I suppose, checking in with what's going on far over our heads, wanting to hear what passes for wisdom—no, wanting to be inside what passes for community. I want to know what's happening to all of us now. The planets are shifting. Over the podcaster, I can hear that the woman's got her phone out in front, no earbuds, volume on, I hear a laugh track. She's watching a show. Instead of greeting each other, we walk wrapped fully into separate media. I think about this separation, the poison gift of our era. We walk amidst the wildflowers through the morning sun, encased by unlimited, now generative consciousness. What has been separated is our sense of each other's bodies. This over-proliferating scroll

dominates our eyes and our ears. What was Alex Karp's phrase in the Palantir earnings report? "The commoditization of cognition." The '90s won. What will we be without each other's bodies, I wonder as we pass each other. What will we do if we move further and further away from our sense of each other's bodies? What sense is that?

I TOUCH THE FLOWERS and reach out for the leaves, reach out for their purples and reds, reach out for green, I think about the sense of spatial orientation fleshed out in the book *Throwing Like a Girl*, a feminist theory about the difference between the relational body and the body disconnected or alone, beginning from its will, rather then its belonging. I think about dancing and moving, and I think about the domination of the warrior, The War Department, these men, all they want is war. Binary bodies ready to win or to die, hardening towards domination, shoring up their will. I think in contrast of bodies that open and close to allow life to pass through, bodies that transform, trans bodies, dancing bodies, Maenads and everybody on the edges, in the chorus, and I think about the sustained life, the dominant life of the wildflowers growing through the neighborhood of West Oakland. I think maybe this is how we'll outstay them, through our flexibility, and through our beauty.

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