

The Wastes

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by [Sixteenthdays](#)

Summary

[GRIAN]

Statement of Cub Fann, regarding a book of poetry and its effects on the surrounding landscape. Originally transcribed nine years ago, February 12, 2013. Statement begins.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Statement:



[Click]

[GRIAN]

Statement of Cub Fann, regarding a book of poetry and its effects on the surrounding landscape. Originally transcribed nine years ago, February 12, 2013. Statement begins.

[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]

I've never been a guy who cares too much about his surroundings. Like, if I've got a good

workspace, I'm a happy man. I moved out of the city a few months ago just for affordability, and honestly, I barely noticed the change. I do a lot of my work remotely anyways, I'm a software engineer, so it wasn't a big deal.

My new place was pretty normal. Small, boxy little house, quiet neighborhood. Had a lawn, which was a first for me, but like I said, I didn't spend much time out there. The most I ever did was I had a habit of hanging out on the front porch with a book in the evenings.

You know those little lending libraries people will set up outside their houses? One of my neighbors had one of those, and one day I popped down there on a whim to check it out. There wasn't much of interest in there- a few cookbooks, a lot of mediocre romance paperbacks- but there *was* one book that caught my eye. It was this skinny little paperback poetry book that looked homemade.

The thing that caught my attention most was that some of the pages were sort of blackened and curled in on the corners, almost like someone had set it too close to a fire or tried to burn it or something. There was no title on the cover, just this really cool sketchy pen drawing of a cracked-open canyon landscape. And when I flipped it open to see if there was any author or publisher info or anything inside, all there was was a stamp. *From the Library of Joe Hills.*

I hadn't met most of my neighbors yet, so I just assumed it was one of their names. I mean, I didn't really have any reason to think otherwise, not then. I thought it was somebody's self-published poetry or old school project, and I was curious enough to grab it and bring it home to take a look.

I flipped through it a bit before bed that night. It only had about twenty or thirty pages, so I read the first couple. I'm not a poetry snob or anything, but I thought they were nice enough. They all talked about this... wasteland, I guess. The first few I read were all in different styles- like there were a couple short little limerick-style ones, and a much longer piece of rhyming verse- but they all described wide, cracked deserts of red sand, bristling with sharp rocks and bubbling with boiling springs.

The imagery sort of stuck with me. Not right away, but that night when I went to sleep I dreamed about that place like it was there. I could see it, cacti and bloody sands and all. I knew just by looking at it that if you tried to cross on foot you wouldn't make it even halfway before you collapsed. It was absolutely inhospitable.

The next morning, my lawn was dead.

It wasn't like... a major thing. Like, it wasn't a big lawn. I didn't have a garden or anything, and, not gonna lie, I didn't take very good care of it? But it was definitely noticeably brown, and it hadn't been before. It sort of put a weird feeling in my chest, just looking at it. It felt *bad* to look at. Like there was something worse about it than just a few patches of dead grass.

I brushed it off, though. Just made a mental note to buy a sprinkler or something next time I was at the store, and went about my day. I probably shouldn't have, but even now I can't really imagine doing anything different, you know? I didn't know. I couldn't have.

I did my work for the day, got done early, had dinner, and then figured I'd sit out on the porch with the book. Like I said, I've never been really into poetry, but something about that book just grabbed me. I think it was the detail. Like, I would read a description of heat radiating off a simmering pool, and just *feel* hot. After awhile, I had to go get up and get myself an ice water.

I don't know exactly when I started reading aloud. I remember taking a drink of water and realizing my lips had gotten chapped, and then taking another and realizing all the ice cubes had

melted. That was what stood out to me, because it shouldn't have even been *warm*. It was late January. I had a jacket on, because it had been cold when I sat down, and as soon as I remembered that I needed to take it off, because I felt like I was going to die from the heat.

All my memories after that point get pretty disconnected. I remember noticing light in my eyes, bright enough to hurt, and looking up, and seeing the sun. It was so hot. The air was shivering from it. It couldn't have been that bright, because it was evening, the sun was setting, but it was so bright, and so hot. The book was still on my lap. I didn't even feel like I could have moved. It was so hot, and I was suddenly so tired. It felt like it weighed a hundred pounds.

I looked up. I felt so hot. The sun was directly overhead- I mean, it can't have been, but it must have been. My neighborhood was gone. No trees, no houses. As far as I could see, it was just... wasteland. The sand was red, and glittering in the sun. I knew it would burn my hands just to touch it. There were these sizzling pools of water, bubbling with heat. And the rocks. They were *sharp*, and they poked up out of the ground everywhere I looked, like teeth.

And there was nothing else. Just the heat, and the wasteland, and me. The book was still lying open in my lap, and- I think part of me wanted to keep reading just to see what would happen? It felt... easier. Like that would be the path of least resistance. But it was overwhelmed by the part of me that was *terrified* of the thought of what would happen to me if this was real.

I could see it. I could *see* myself staggering through that wasteland for days and days and days, slowly dying of hunger and thirst, trying to reach the edge and never finding it.

It was the smell of smoke that brought me out of it. It reached my brain right through the heat haze and the terror, and it finally made me turn away from the open book and the endless wasteland back to my house, because it was burning. That was what snapped me out of it. If my house burned down, there really would be nothing left besides me and the wasteland.

I didn't know what was happening, and I was half-delirious from the heat, but I knew it was the book. It *had* to be because of the book. I dragged myself to my feet and stumbled inside. The heat was even worse in there, and the smell of smoke was stronger. I didn't know where the fire was, but I knew soon it would be everywhere.

I thought about burning the book. It seemed like the easiest way to destroy it. But as soon as I thought about it, I knew it wouldn't work. Those blackened pages... somebody else had tried. Maybe a lot of somebodies.

So instead, I dragged myself over to my sink, and ran the water. It took a second for it to come out, and when it did it was all rusty and warm, but it was water. I shoved the book underneath it, and the paper just... *dissolved* into ash. I left the water running until it was all gone down the drain.

And the heat went with it, and the smoke, and the smell of rust and blood. When I looked out the window again, it was dark, like it should have been, and my neighborhood was back. The wasteland was just gone. Like it had never been there.

My lawn still hasn't grown back, though. It doesn't even grow grass, now. There's nothing but parched, cracked ground.

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[GRIAN]

Joe Hills. *Again*. You know, I am entirely *sick* of that man giving me the runaround. I just want to meet him and get a proper statement out of him! Is that really so much to ask?

In fact, I- hmm.

I need to check into something. I'll probably have another follow-up tape to add to this file later.

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Supplemental:

[Click]

[SCAR]

Hello, recorder Grian must have forgotten to turn off before he left earlier, I'm definitely not snooping. Yep! Right, Jellie?

(A very adorable meow)

See, she corberates! Corrobreads? Clobberbeaks? Cormorants? Agrees with me. *And* she agrees that looking at the statement Grian left on his desk is just being a diligent assistant, so let me just take a *quick* peek...

(Papers being slid across a surface)

Oh, what, *he* left a statement? *(Meow)* I *know* right, Jellie. So strange! I wonder what he was doing here? I thought he lived in America. But this reminds me actually, I should probably write up a statement about him, while I've got the time and all that. Get myself off the hook for all the snooping I'm not doing, or whatever.

Oh-

[Click]

End Notes

the episode where joe is threatened/blackmailed into writing poetry about cub's biome is honestly one of my favorites in the entirety of season 8. [it's good poetry, too.](#)

anyways this was a shorter one since i am still traveling BUT it was very fun to write. and finally circled around to one of the entities i have been unable to cross off so far. we're currently at 12/15!! very fun.

if u want to ask me questions or chat abt my au ever, also, i am on tumblr at @sixteenth-days, and u should come hang out!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!