

THE CAMPO SANTO
QUARTERLY
REVIEW

Moss Day

- DUNCAN FYFE -

*From the Bureau of
the Campo Santo
Ombudsman*

- DUNCAN FYFE -

*Unbearable
Lightning*

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*Out of
State*

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THE CAMPO SANTO QUARTERLY REVIEW

Written and Curated by Campo Santo Ombudsman Duncan Fyfe
With Invaluable Contributions from Aisling Conlon

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FROM THE BUREAU OF THE CAMPO SANTO OMBUDSMAN

FOR MONTHS, the team at Campo Santo has been hard at work on a secret project, and even I, the Campo Santo Ombudsman, could only guess at what they were up to in their San Francisco workshop. At night, I dreamed of them standing and administering to their creation, but now, the mystery of Campo Santo is a mystery no more, and the project has been given form and voice, and shape and name, and that name is FIREWATCH --

It is Firewatch.

So what do we know about Firewatch? It is a video game, Campo Santo's first, to be released for personal computers in 2015. No longer will the name Firewatch be associated with fire safety equipment and fire and rescue software solutions. You can throw those brands in the garbage.

Firewatch is a video game, perhaps the first video game, about being a fire lookout. The fire lookout is a solitary but dignified post, which in the history of American labor has been held by notable persons like Jack Kerouac and a man who was struck by lightning seven times. A closer look at that history appears later in this issue.

Another likely video game first: Firewatch takes place in the state of Wyoming, where the Campos Santo Sean Vanaman and Nels Anderson each grew up. I'm told that they lived in separate cities but encountered each other at least once, when their high school debate teams met at championships. Firewatch must be a special project indeed if these two enemies could agree to put their differences aside.

"I set [Firewatch] in Wyoming," Mr Vanaman told me, "because, selfishly, I grew up there and realized that if I didn't take this opportunity to set a game in Wyoming I probably would never get to work on a game set there. There's something particularly odd about people who live there or become connected to it and I want to try to dig into that stuff as much as possible." To read more about Wyoming, turn to the story 'Out of State' later in this issue. To read nothing more about Wyoming, close this window or print out the Campo Santo Quarterly Review and put it in the trash.

That's what we know: Firewatch is a video game set in 1989 Wyoming, about the business of fire lookouts. Who could have seen that coming?

I should have seen it coming.

Readers of the last Campo Santo Quarterly Review (now a relic from a pre-Firewatch-announcement world) may remember that I visited a Tarot card reader in the basement of an occult bookstore for the advance and exclusive scoop on what would be Campo Santo's first game. And in retrospect - now that details of the game have come to light - I can see now that the Tarot reading provided me with absolutely no useful information about what the game was. The Ombudsman's time has been wasted.

We all know that the function of an Ombudsman is, in part, to settle a grievance between an organisation and its public. But what if the Ombudsman himself has a grievance? What then?

I consulted the Ombudsman Handbook, which said nothing of how to deal with a situation like this. I decided that the best course of action was to call the occult bookstore and set up a second appointment with my Tarot reader so I could ask the Tarot to explain why it had been so unhelpful to me.

I went ahead with this, only to learn - this is true - that the bookstore has a specific policy against booking Tarot readings for people more than once every three months, so as to "discourage dependent relationships with divinatory consultants."

I was cut off. And so my search for supernatural knowledge did not result in an apology from the Tarot dimension as I'd hoped, but the humiliating realisation that I might have a problem.

"Can I speak to your Ombudsman?" I should have said to them, but I didn't think of that until much later. Then when I searched online for the phrase "Tarot card Ombudsman", the first result turned out to be me, which only made it worse somehow.

This is, whatever, this is the Campo Santo Quarterly Review.

Duncan Fyfe
London, England
May 2014



MOSS DAY

"REALLY?" WAS MORE OR LESS Jake Rodkin's reaction when Olly Moss said yes. Yes, Olly Moss had said, he was interested in being part of this indie video game company that Jake and his colleague Sean were thinking about.

Yes, Olly said again: I'm interested. And, then, okay - that was that.

That Campo Santo would launch with Olly Moss on board was a surprise for a handful of reasons. The British artist and graphic designer, 27, is a major and sought-after talent, known for his work with clients like Mondo, DC Comics, Marvel Studios, Lucasfilm, Studio Ghibli and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He is not known for making video games. Nor is he really known for working in the way that a project like Campo Santo's *Firewatch* needs to be worked on: as a member of a team, serving a shared creative vision, and on a timeline of many months, if not years.

It's now over a year since Olly Moss said yes, and over six months into his role as *Firewatch*'s art director, which he performs remotely from his home city of Winchester, England, with frequent trips to Campo Santo's San Francisco office. Time enough, I thought, to pose the question of whether Olly Moss and game development really suit one another. A fine quest for the Campo Santo Ombudsman!

On a Friday afternoon, I travelled to Winchester to meet with Olly and conduct his six-month performance review. Strictly speaking, this doesn't fall under the definition of "Ombudsman business," which is why, strictly speaking, Jake and Sean did not "know about it." But how to measure a man's worth as a video game art director? Once again, I consulted the Ombudsman Handbook for guidance, and once again it was of no use whatsoever. I would have to look elsewhere for a suitable employee assessment tool.

What I thought made the most sense was a Dungeons & Dragons character sheet. Filling this out would let me assign a numeric value to Olly's strength, dexterity, constitution, intelligence, wisdom and charisma - values that would be determined by subjecting Olly to a battery of challenges and feats. The completed character sheet would be presented to Sean and Jake for their signature.

Olly seemed to have no problem with any of this.

Winchester is a small English city 70 miles southwest of London. It's pleasant, affluent, everything is a ten-minute walk from everything, and everywhere is closed after seven. It's famous, perhaps, for once being the capital of England, and because King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table's very own Round Table hangs on a wall in the Great Hall of Winchester Castle. Though it's apparently not the real round table, but a commemorative replica built for King Edward I in the 13th century, and later painted over by Henry VIII with a picture of himself dressed up as King Arthur. So it's a shitty table, basically, not fit for a dog. Jane Austen is also in Winchester. Her body is buried in Winchester Cathedral, one of the largest cathedrals in all of England. A local Winchester hero, William Walker, saved that cathedral way back in Downton Abbey times - he was a deep sea diver who singlehandedly reinforced the cathedral's foundation to stop it sinking into the ground.

This is the city of Moss.

At Olly's suggestion, we met for lunch at a pub called the Green Man. Winchester, Olly told me earlier in an email, was a "buzzing hub of mediocrity," but it did not lack for pubs. Olly wore a tan coat and a white shirt. Very striking. Good outfit. They were just very good clothes. Olly ordered the Green Man Burger, with pancetta, mature cheddar and rosemary fries, and a pint of Blue Moon, a Colorado wheat beer. I ordered those, too, to try and understand the way Olly thinks. I also wondered if I should get a new coat.

It was Friday, which was not a Campo Santo day. Olly works on Firewatch four days a week, outside of which he continues to pursue freelance work. He showed me something that he'd been working on: four posters inspired by the movie Top Gun, and all depictions of the one volleyball scene from the movie.

Olly Moss wakes up at first light and is at his desk from eight in the morning until six in the evening, working with a huge array of computer monitors and a printer the size of a tanning bed. Around six o'clock is when the San Francisco office appears on the company chat and a Google Hangouts video channel.

"I do concept art, I'm doing some texture work - or I will be, eventually, Jane [Ng] is roughing in textures and I'm going over them and making them more like the art. There are certain things in Unity that I can do. I'm not a complete technology baby, so I'm learning 3D and stuff where I can." He'll turn in whatever he's done at around six, "and then I'm like, 'here's what I did, seeya!'" He may stick around if he doesn't have plans, but generally everyone else will give their feedback on his work while he's out or asleep, and then he'll deal with that the next morning.

Jane Ng, Campo Santo's environment and lighting artist, is responsible for translating Olly's art into actual 3D assets that appear in the game. I wondered whether Olly was finding it strange to not be the person ultimately delivering on his vision, but he was quick to shoot this down and in a way that didn't just sound like professional courtesy, either. "Jane is doing a really good job. If I didn't like what she was doing, it would be 'no no no no no no,' but... but no, she's killing it. And there's back and forth - she'll do something and I'll think it's like 85 per cent of the way there and I'll take a screenshot and sketch over it and say no, the rock should be sharper, or move this tree over here. A lot of it is about composing shapes, which I'm good at, so I can say, hmm if you're coming at it from this angle... remove this, this, this and this... there's elements of that I can do myself in Unity, if it's a simple element, but otherwise I can take a screenshot and paint over it and be like, move this, change this shape... and be a horrible dictator."

In some ways, he prefers this to being in the office, which he works from so regularly now that he dreams of waking up in it to an earthquake, and running outside with the servers under his arm. "When I'm doing concepts in the office, it's so small and close-quarters that I've got people looking over my shoulder and saying 'that's cool, but you should change that,' and I'm like, 'it's not finished yet!' It's always easier to present finished pieces. I do much better when I'm not trying to please someone, when I just do what I think is good. I'm not used to working with other people like that."

Apparently the studio is exploring new ways of remote working. It has in its possession something called a "telepresence robot," basically an iPad attached to the top of a Segway, and which allows someone like Olly to not only videoconference with the San Francisco office, but drive around in it with a little robot. Olly says he can activate the robot at night, but this

would trigger the building's motion alarms. The telepresence robot was a gift from Double Robotics, a Sunnyvale, California company, who hoped, no doubt, that their product would be promoted in the Campo Santo Quarterly Review. "We are a video game developer and brand influencer," Olly confirms.

I asked Olly how he got involved with this particular brand influencer in the first place, and the answer was Jake Rodkin. "He's a guy who's got a really good eye for design and is not afraid to shit all over things that I'm doing," Olly said. The two had been fans of each other's work for a few years before Jake ever made serious overtures about working together. "I would always show him what I was working on and he would tell me what was good or bad about it. Because I never know. Here's a thing I did, maybe it's good, maybe it's not, I don't know. He's a really good, honest person to have... one of the few people I know that would give me good advice."

Olly thinks they'd both hit the same point in their careers ("which was, I've been doing this for a while now and I want to try something different") when Jake invited him to be part of Campo Santo. "I always wanted to be involved in games. Ever since I was super young. But I don't know, I feel like ... people will only ever ask you to do the thing you've already done. So no one was asking me to make a game. They were like 'hey, we work on Halo, do you want to do a Halo thing?' Oh yeah, that sounds cool. 'Oh yeah, we need a t-shirt for it.' Hmm. No, I want to contribute to... I want to make an actual game. It wasn't an ambition, [it was] just in the back of my mind: yeah, one day. One day I'd like to do this, have a crack at this. A good opportunity came along so I jumped on it."

On our way to another pub, after the Green Man, we paused at Winchester Cathedral to pay our respects at Jane Austen's grave. "I come here to shake my fist at it, for all the times that we had to read her at school," Olly said.

"Was it a lot?" I asked.

"No, not really."

"Do you hate her books?"

"Not really, they're fine."



We stopped at her grave anyway. Olly shook his fist thoroughly. He suggested we also check out the illuminated Winchester Bible displayed behind glass on a higher floor of the cathedral. The pages we saw of the bible had been written and drawn in the year 1160 by High Middle Ages creatives like the Master of Gothic Majesty, the Master of Apocrypha and the Master of Leaping Figures.

"What would you be the master of," I asked.

"Master... of the... Top Gun Volleyball Poster."

"You like Top Gun."

"I do."

When Olly agreed to join Campo Santo, it was on the basis of wanting to work with Jake and Sean. Firewatch was one of several ideas being

considered at that point, and the idea has changed significantly since the first pitch. "When they first pitched it to me, [I mostly thought] 'I like drawing forests! I can draw a forest. Let's do that.' I was thinking about it purely from an aesthetic standpoint.

"Then we started talking about the narrative stuff, and I realised that I had thoughts about how those things should be too, and pitching on those. I feel like I've had a lot of input into what the final thing is, which is nice. It's given me a lot of confidence to be assertive with narrative and writing. I mean, I did an English lit degree, but I never actually tried my hand at writing stuff. But Sean was like, oh, you're good at this! You should do some more."

While Olly is responsible for the overall look of the game, he's still never been to Wyoming, where Firewatch is set. "I'll do a concept and Sean will say 'I like it, but it doesn't feel like Wyoming.' Which is a nebulous thing. And I'm like, I don't know, who has been to Wyoming, who cares? It looks cool. But it's about finding the balance between creative things that I think look brilliant but things that also feel like a specific place.

"I didn't know much about fire lookouts either. We don't have any forest [in England.] But everyone, when they hear about it, they're like 'oh, cool, fire lookouts, amazing!' Apparently that was something everyone was super aware of and I had no idea. It's a cabin where you can be by yourself in the woods and nobody bothers you. I basically sit in my office all day staring out a window doing nothing so I'm already like halfway there."

Ten minutes away from the cathedral is another pub, The Black Boy, where we stopped for another drink. "There have been times in my life when I've found [that name] weird," Olly said when I asked about it.

Olly excused himself to go to the bathroom, or 'water closet,' in the UK. When he returned I was sitting at a table holding a Dungeons & Dragons character sheet. Now the real interview could begin. Before determining his ability scores, I asked for the basic biographical information that we needed to fill out the sheet.

"What is your race?"

He paused. "Isn't it the law that you can't ask me that in an interview?"

Which is fair enough, so we left that, and gender, blank. Olly did offer up that his alignment is 'chaotic neutral' and his class is 'middle', for what that's worth. I also learned that Olly possesses a magic item - the Hammer of Thor, Mjöllnir itself! He received said hammer, a prop from Marvel Studios' 2011 film Thor, as compensation for designing a poster for the film's cast and crew. He has been using it as a toilet roll holder and has been specifically instructed by Kevin Feige, the president of Marvel Studios, not to publish any pictures of this.



Olly's first test is a test of wisdom. An easy enough challenge, I explained: all he needed to do is answer a simple riddle.

I am greater than God
More evil than Satan
The rich need me
The poor have me

Who am I?

Olly didn't know the answer. I felt I had no choice but to score him a zero for wisdom, and I started to worry about how this whole thing was going to go.

The second test is of charisma. I'd bought the latest issue of Cosmpolitan, featuring a very charismatic Kaley Cuoco on the cover, in the hope that one of the quizzes inside might adequately quantify Olly's charisma. The only quiz in the issue was called 'Are You A Secret Bitch?' so Olly did that. From his responses, we learned that he was the kind of person to tell an insecure little sister that she's beautiful, complement the physique of a middle school P.E. teacher, and pretend to love an awful piece of jewellery if it's a gift. Olly is far from a secret bitch. On a scale from Jennifer Aniston to Naomi Campbell, Cosmo puts him at Jennifer Aniston: "You exude so much warmth, people get tan just standing near you. How are you so wonderful?"

Olly wasn't wild about being Jennifer Aniston, who he described as a "charisma vacuum" and "the Nandos of people." We agreed to rate the charisma of Jennifer Aniston - and Olly Moss - at an average five.

Intelligence was up next. I presented Olly with a small Transformers toy, the evil Predacon Hun-Gurrr, and challenged Olly to transform him from robot to beast mode without the instructions, which I hid in my pocket. The packaging for this toy ranked the complexity of its transformation as 'easy' and 'facile.' Perhaps hoping to make up some lost ground, Olly quickly got to work configuring Hun-Gurrr into his bipedal, twin-headed dragon form. This actually didn't take him very long, though he was stumped over what to do with Hun-Gurrr's Dragontooth Saw accessory, a kind of bayonet gun that he eventually affixed to Hun-Gurrr's crotch. Olly would have scored a ten in toilet humour were that an option on the character sheet, but it wasn't. Regardless, a ten in intelligence was awarded.

Olly declined to face me in an arm-wrestling contest to measure his strength, citing sleepiness induced by three beers, which we agreed should result in a lowered constitution score. We adjourned instead to the Black Boy's fussball table for a challenge in dexterity, which he lost. Olly did, however, tilt the heavy table a couple of times when the ball was stuck in the middle, and did so with ease, earning him a strength score of eight.

I have to say, once I completed this character sheet, I was not entirely convinced of its utility. What did it tell me about Olly, really? What had I

learned? That Olly was trained in the minor skills of Bluff and History? That his powers include being able to hum and whistle at the same time? That his armour class is a 'one'? When would that ever come up, outside of combat? I don't know. We got another beer each, and as Olly talked, and played around idly with Hun-Gurrr, I saw that there was a box on the character sheet for reflex still empty. I wondered what would happen if I threw the cap of my pen at Olly's face while he was distracted, but the thought of taking out Olly Moss' eye was so terrifying that I left it alone.

"I'm so up and down on a fulltime job," Olly said. "The best thing about being freelance and being able to sell prints of my work and do... and to have the luxury of being in the position I am... I mean, it's an insane luxury, right? And the best thing about it is just the freedom. Being able to wake up and say today I'm going to work on this. Or, today I'm not going to do anything. And - ultimate first world problems - sometimes it's hard to wake up and do an actual job. And put in the nine to five when I know that I could just do - I don't want to say do less work, because I've always been a hard worker, but I always like working on things that I desperately want to be working on. With the game, it's like, today I have to draw some wood textures. And that's just not as fun. There's no two ways about it.

"But I hadn't done it in a really long time. I need to work with other people, I need to challenge myself. I need to make something bigger than myself, and I need to... and what better opportunity to work with people who are all super talented in different ways, and who I respect. That sounds like bullshit. That sounds like a bullshit answer, but it's absolutely true."

Drinks continued long into the night. Nels Anderson woke up in Vancouver and turned on the webcam in his home office, broadcasting into Winchester and San Francisco, where he and Olly were joined by, in order of their arrival in the Campo Santo office on a Friday morning, Will Armstrong, Jane Ng and Jake Rodkin. In Winchester, drinks continued.

My girlfriend Aisling met Olly for the first time later that night at the Wykeham Arms, a third pub, where the chairs are bolted to the floor. In conversation with Olly, she was intrigued to learn that the last time he had been on a proper job interview was more than eight years ago, for a sales position at GAME, a UK retailer, which he did get. Aisling, an HR professional, quickly offered to give Olly a proper, albeit mock, job interview, which was very enjoyable and good until Olly answered a

question with a laugh and "My greatest weakness is probably that I'm too much of a perfectionist?"

Aisling folded her arms over an open notebook. "Why would I hire you?"

Olly stopped to think about it. "Because honestly?" He leaned forward and spoke quickly. "I'm really good at what I do. I'm never satisfied until I'm making something - oh God! You're turning me into a person who I hate. I'm good. I'm really good at what I do. I'm an all-rounder and I can execute as much as any idea that I have - I can execute well. And I have good ideas. I'm a functional artist but I'm a good ideas person and I can do that better than most people. I had to do the poster for the Oscars. And I pitched an idea that was way up there, way more than the time and energy I was supposed to be spending on it. But I really liked the idea and I destroyed myself, I destroyed my back... because I knew it was going to be good at the end of the day."

"Why are you creative?"

"I don't know how to be any other way."

Earlier that day, at the Black Boy, Olly and I chatted about his work on Firewatch as we prepared to leave. "It will be clear that I've done it, I think, though not in the way people expect." Olly fiddled some more with Hun-Gurrr, to whom he really seemed to have taken a liking. "It won't be like looking at a poster I did and saying, I want to play that. But my fingerprints are on it. Things like... the stylization gets stronger when you look out into the distance. It becomes more painterly."

Olly glanced down at Hun-Gurrr. "Do you want this back?"

"No, you can have him."

"Thanks. I'm really into this toy." Olly removed the Dragontooth Saw from the Predacon's crotch. "He's good. He's really good. It irritates my OCD-ness that his gun doesn't have a clear place to go."

I consulted Hun-Gurrr's instructions. "Oh, okay. His gun is supposed to fit into a hole on the outside of his leg. It's actually the same place that it goes into when he's in robot mode."

"Hm," Olly said. "Bad design."



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Olliv Moss

ABILITIES AND SKILLS

8 Strength Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Strength measures your physical power.

Athletics Trained MISC. CHECK

8 Constitution Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Constitution represents health, stamina, and vital force.

Endurance Trained MISC. CHECK

4 Dexterity Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Dexterity measures coordination, agility, and balance.

Acrobatics Trained MISC. CHECK

Stealth Trained MISC. CHECK

Thievery Trained MISC. CHECK

10 Intelligence Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Intelligence describes how well you learn and reason.

Arcana Trained MISC. CHECK

History Trained MISC. CHECK

Religion Trained MISC. CHECK

0 Wisdom Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Wisdom measures common sense, self-discipline, and empathy.

Dungeoneering Trained MISC. CHECK

Heal Trained MISC. CHECK

Insight Trained MISC. CHECK

Nature Trained MISC. CHECK

Perception Trained MISC. CHECK

5 Charisma Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Charisma measures force of personality and leadership.

Bluff Trained MISC. CHECK

Diplomacy Trained MISC. CHECK

Intimidate Trained MISC. CHECK

Streetwise Trained MISC. CHECK

POWERS AND FEATS

- can hum and whistle at the same time
- Brand influencer
- Finger + thumb manipulation

WEALTH

0 gold

COMBAT STATISTICS

6 Initiative Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Roll initiative to determine the turn order in combat.

8 Speed Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Your speed is the number of squares you can move with a move action.

DEFENSES

1 Armor Class (AC) Trained MODIFIER CHECK

AC measures how hard it is to physically land an attack on you.

7 Fortitude Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Fortitude measures your toughness and resilience.

7 Reflex Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Reflex measures your ability to deflect or dodge attacks.

10 Will Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Will measures your strength of will, self-discipline, and devotion.

Attack Bonus Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Attack Bonus Trained MODIFIER CHECK

When you attack, roll a d20 and add your attack bonus. Compare the result to the monster's defense to see if you hit. If you do hit, roll damage.

10 Hit Points Trained MODIFIER CHECK

Your hit points measure the damage you can take before falling unconscious. Your bloodied value is half of your hit points (rounded down).

Healing Surge Value

Surges Per Day

When you spend a healing surge, you regain hit points equal to your healing surge value, which is one-quarter of your hit points (rounded down).

CURRENT HIT POINTS

Temporary Hit Points Surges Used

EQUIPMENT AND MAGIC ITEMS

- The Hammer of Thor, Mjolnir, forged in the heart of a dying star
- 3D printer (pending)

ACTIONS IN COMBAT

On your turn in combat, you can take three actions:

- ◆ A standard action, which is usually an attack
- ◆ A move action, which involves movement
- ◆ A minor action, which is simple and quick

You can give up an action to take another action from lower on the list, so you can take a move or a minor action instead of a standard action or a minor action instead of a move action.

Class: Middle Level: 27

Race: _____ Gender: _____

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Languages: English

French (some)

CHARACTER NOTES



Use this space however you like: to record what happens on your adventures, track quests, describe your background and goals, note the names of the other characters in your party, or draw a picture of your character.

EXPERIENCE POINTS (XP)

• Sung Disney songs with Josh Whedon
XP for next level: _____

• Held baby ologoth

Permission is granted to photocopy this character sheet for home game use only. TM & ©2010 Wizards of the Coast LLC.

UNBEARABLE LIGHTNING

"WHEN YOU TELL PEOPLE you're making a game about something like a fire lookout," Jake Rodkin, the Campo Santo creative director, said to me, "they will tell you about everyone they've ever heard of who has done that job, and all the books about it you should buy. [Jack Kerouac's] *The Dharma Bums* is now sitting by my bed in the neglected pile of still-to-read research books, along with *Fire Season* by Philip Connors and Richard Scarry's *Best Word Book Ever* (for its depiction of a bear working in a fire lookout tower on page 35)."

But, Rodkin added, "Nobody has -- as of yet -- told me about the guy who was struck by lightning."

* * *

Roy Sullivan, who died in 1983, was a park ranger and fire lookout better known for having survived more lightning strikes in his life than any other human. Sullivan was hit by lightning a preposterous seven times, once in 1942 and on six more occasions between 1969 and 1977 - a rate of almost once per year. He met his end in Doods, Virginia at the age of 71, from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the chest - a suicide that had nothing to do with lightning and everything to do, supposedly, with a mysterious, unrequited love.

Sullivan was thirty years old in 1942, six years into a park service career at Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. He was stationed as a fire lookout in the Millers Head lookout tower in April, when a heavy storm set the newly constructed tower ablaze. Sullivan fled outside, but the lightning quickly found and struck him, burning through his leg and escaping out a hole in his shoe.

"Ever been shocked real bad?" Sullivan would say later. "It's worse. Ever been scalded? It's much worse. It's like being cooked inside your skin."

Sullivan recovered, and returned to work. There's not much information out there about what he did over the next seventeen years, likely because he was not being struck by lightning at any point. Sullivan's story picks back up in 1969, with the ranger driving a park truck along a mountain road. Lightning deflected off some trees and into the open window of Sullivan's

truck, knocking him out. By some accounts, the truck veered off the road and slowed to a stop at the edge of a cliff, which seems too insane to believe, but then again, what about this story isn't?

In 1970, the year of Sullivan's third strike, he was in his front yard when it happened. And so a pattern emerges: the lightning strikes were getting closer and closer to where he lived. The lightning was following him home.

The media caught on to Sullivan's weird and statistically improbable tale around this time. "Bolts From Sky Have Struck Gentle, Upright Roy 7 Times," boasted an October 23, 1977 article in the Lakeland Ledger, above the headline "'Bubble Boy' is Normal Mentally."

"I have tried to lead a good life," Sullivan told the press in 1972. "I have never been a fearful man. But I have to tell you the truth. When I hear it thunder now, I feel a little shaky." He was struck that year - number four - while on duty at Shenandoah. The lightning set his hair on fire, which he extinguished with a damp towel from his ranger's cabin.

"Just before it strikes," he said, "I smell a certain smell, like sulphur, and my hair bristles all over. That's the signal. In about two seconds, no longer than three, it hits. Too late to hide." Now, Sullivan had come to expect it, to fear it, though he was no closer to understanding the reason for it. "I don't believe God is after me," he theorised. "If he was, the first bolt would have been enough.... Best I can figure is that I have some chemical, some mineral, in my body that draws lightning. I just wish I knew."

God, he tried. In August 1973, he got in his car and floored it at the first sign of a forming storm cloud. Satisfied that he'd outrun it, he got out of his car to watch the storm and was struck through by more lightning. Number five. The same thing happened again in 1976. Sullivan, while surveying a campground, felt that a cloud was following him, and tried to run- but it got him anyway.

"Naturally," Sullivan said, "people avoid me. I was walking with the chief ranger one day and lightning struck way off and he said 'I'll see you later, Roy.' There's a restaurant on Loft Mountain that even if it's just overcast they won't let me in. I can't blame them. Who wants to be near somebody that's all the time getting hit by lightning?"

Sullivan did manage to escape at least one time. A storm appeared while Sullivan and his family were hanging out in his back yard, but the lightning missed him and struck his wife instead. And that changed things. "When a storm blows up," Sullivan explained, "I put my wife and three kids in the living room and go off by myself and sit in the kitchen, scared."

The seventh and final strike was in June 1977. Sullivan was alone this time, fishing in a freshwater pool. When the lightning hit, it almost didn't matter. Sullivan brushed it off, attended to his injuries, and was about to carry on with business when he noticed a bear pawing at the trout hanging from his fishing line. One last indignity. Some might say that this turn of events was too much for Roy to 'bear'. Some might say that Roy Sullivan was fucking furious, and that he broke a branch off a tree, ran at the bear, and bashed at its head repeatedly.

Maybe Sullivan's battery of the bear with the tree branch was a kind of catharsis. A vicious, brutal release of the frustration and aggression that must have built up over 35 years of destruction visited upon him by an unconquerable tormentor, and a sustained campaign of violence that Sullivan was impotent to revenge.

Or maybe not - Sullivan claimed that that was the 27th bear he ever hit in his lifetime, so perhaps this was just something he did on the regular. We don't know. And what of this bear? Could it have been famous itself - perhaps the fire lookout of which Richard Scarry wrote? We just don't know. We don't have that information.

Then, 1983, Roy Sullivan shot himself in the stomach. It was a brutal, sudden death, said to be wrought by the pain of unrequited love. We don't know about the object of this love, nor the reasons for its failure. What we know about Roy Sullivan, what was the focus of his obituary, was that he was struck by lightning seven times. This love is unrequited and forgotten. What we do know is that it was painful enough that he wanted to die - so more painful than getting violently and repeatedly electrocuted his whole adult life and being made a fearful, freakish pariah.

Loving somebody who does not love you is hard. Roy Sullivan knew that, evidently, and so did the lightning that never let him rest. Lightning loved Roy Sullivan. Lightning never loved any human being like it loved Roy Sullivan. Out of five billion people in the world, it came back to Roy

Sullivan over and over. He was the only one who could ever capture its attention.

Lightning went crazy for Roy Sullivan. It followed him home, and watched him while he worked. Sullivan never wanted lightning's affection, actively tried to escape it, and was only ever made miserable by it. The love that lightning had for Roy Sullivan was impossible to ever reciprocate, but it did succeed: it claimed him. Lightning overshadowed Sullivan's life, bound them together - he will always be remembered, only be remembered, as lightning's unwilling plaything.

It was a strange kind of love. To some it seemed nothing more than lightning harassing the shit out of an old man, but to others it seemed like screams out of the sky, calling for an answer: I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU, REQUITE ME --

Bolts From Sky Have Struck Gentle, Upright Roy 7 Times

DOOMS, Va. (AP) — Roy Sullivan, bless his beleaguered heart, is as gentle and upright as a person can be. He pays his bills, loves his family, goes to church, has never harmed a soul.

Why is it, then, that Roy Sullivan has been struck by lightning seven times?

Seven times. Zap. Zap. Zap. Zap. Zap. Zap. Zap.

"Lordy, I wish I knew," he said. "It's awful. I don't believe God is after me. If he was, the first bolt would have been enough. I don't believe that business about when you're born, either. Other folks born on Feb. 7, 1912, haven't been struck by lightning seven times.

"Best I can figure is that I have some chemical, some mineral, in my body that draws lightning. I just wish I knew."

Roy Sullivan spent his working life as a ranger in the Shenandoah National Park, as beautiful and benevolent a piece of geography as exists in the land, and was hit six of the seven times in the park.

He retired last year and had to move off the park, so he bought himself a house trailer and a piece of land nearby (though he might have, for heaven's sake, picked some other town) and



ROY SULLIVAN
... different magnetism.

now is busy duplicating the arrangement he had at his former home.

He is constructing four lightning rods, one at each corner of the trailer. He is attaching rods to every tall tree on the place, in this case six. He has put a rod on his electric-meter pole and another on his TV antenna. Twelve lightning rods in all, and all, as he explained hopefully, "made of number six heavy duty pure copper wire sunk

seven feet in the ground and the ground kept wet."

By Zeus, that ought to do it. "Well, you don't know. Lightning has a way of finding me. When a storm blows up I put my wife and three kids in the living room and go off by myself and sit in the kitchen, scared."

Roy Sullivan's shocking statistics:

Jolt number one came in 1942 in a lookout tower; number two in 1969 while driving his truck; number three in 1970 in his front yard; number four in 1972 inside a ranger station when the bolt searched him out through the fuse box; number five in 1973 when he thought he had outrun a storm and got out of his car to watch it; number six last year while checking a campground; number seven last July, fishing.

"I wasn't right in the storm all those times. Once I was a good 10 miles away. But if there is a single dark cloud in the sky, out will come a bolt and get me."

Roy's misadventures have knocked him unconscious, burned off his hair, torn off his shoe, damaged his hearing, ripped off his toenail, hurled him in the air, and left him with a drawer full of woeful relics such as a melted

pocket watch and a wardrobe of hats and shirts and underwear with brown-edged holes. "Ever been shocked real bad? It's worse. Ever been scalded? It's much worse. It's like being cooked inside your skin.

"Just before it strikes I smell a certain smell, like sulphur, and my hair bristles all over. That's the signal. In about two seconds, no longer than three, it hits. Too late to hide.

"Naturally, people avoid me. I was walking with the chief ranger one day and lightning struck way off and he said, 'I'll see you later, Roy.'"

"There's a restaurant up on Loft Mountain that even if it's just overcast they won't let me in.

"I can't blame them. Who wants to be near somebody that's all the time getting hit by lightning?"

"Tell you something else. The fourth time I was struck I dreamed in March that I would be struck in April. It happened April 16. I have a feeling I'm going to be struck again someday. I guess I'm just somebody who gets struck by lightning. Why would that be?"

It does beat all. But good luck to you, Roy Sullivan, and pleasant dreams.

'Bubble Boy' Is Normal Mentally

HOUSTON (AP) — Six-year-old common cold might kill him, spe- been able to mold and cuddle

OUT OF STATE

LIZZIE MARSHALL got out of Wyoming because of David Summers. He was the tall British guy who holidayed at Teton Village where she worked. David's visits made tolerable all the rest of her workdays, spent measuring tourists for ski boots and snowboards, taking photos of couples posing against the slopes, and explaining to everyone who came through that it's against the rules to a) drink beer on the slopes, or b) take pictures of bears if you see one in the summer, or c) do anything involving bears, and even though that ought to be pretty obvious, she thought, half of the time they got drunk or did something terrible with a goddamn bear anyway, and what can you do, who even knows.

David was in America getting an MBA at the University of Colorado and liked to go on ski holidays in between semesters. Even though Aspen and Vail were literally right there where he lived, David insisted that the ski slopes of Teton Village in Jackson, Wyoming were the sophisticated man's choice: beautiful, famous, less of a tourist attraction. Lizzie argued that nothing in Jackson was beautiful and Wyoming was famous for nothing, besides maybe Dick Cheney being from there and the time when Lizzie's dad took a picture with Harrison Ford at the library, and that wasn't even Harrison Ford, just an old man with an earring. Wyoming was not worth visiting and David was insane to do so, Lizzie told him. Regardless, he kept on visiting. And when he couldn't visit, Lizzie would drive the eight hours south to Colorado to see him. A year later, when David finished with the MBA, he asked her to move to London with him and she said yes. She thought about Wyoming, and she said yes to David again, and then yes yes yes.

"You'll do anything that guys tell you to do," complained Lizzie's co-worker Justin when he heard she had quit. On his days off Justin rode an Arctic Cat snowmobile emblazoned with pot leaf decals around in circles at Togwotee, and invited girls to go for rides. Lizzie had never done anything Justin had told her to do.

On her last day at work, Lizzie was bored like on all the other days, and rested her elbows on the desk by the cash register, wearing holes in the cotton of the maroon uniform. The radio died and Justin dug into the wiring while she gazed out the window at the snow falling gently on the slopes, the pine trees, the clouds moving lazily over the mountains and all

of that picturesque stuff that she was generally pretty happy to putting behind her.

Justin offered to buy Lizzie a farewell Jager Bomb which she declined, and presented her with a gift: a fridge magnet with a picture of a rodeo cowboy atop a bronco, and the phrase EQUALITY STATE printed underneath. Lizzie said thanks and put it in her coat pocket.

"Remember this," he said. "Don't forget who you are. You are Laura of Jackson. Or Laura of Wyoming. What sounds better?"

"Neither of them, also, it's Lizzie."

"Yeah - Lizzie - right! I totally do - I do know what your name is. I must have been thinking of somebody else. I don't know who."

"Probably Laura."

"Maybe."

"You know this is it, right?" she said. "This is goodbye forever."

"Well, you will always have a place here," he threatened.

Lizzie hadn't thought twice about giving up her place in Wyoming. Yeah, her parents were still living there, and being apart from them would be sad, but if she were entirely honest with herself, she hated Wyoming, always did. She hated how her identity was tied up with a place so provincial and small. She drove herself crazy daydreaming about how much she could have done with her life by now had she been born in a place that was part of the world. She wished that in London people might mistake her American-ness for, like, New York American-ness, or even mistake her for English after a time, because she didn't know much about England but it at least felt connected to something. Just the thought of living there made her feel connected, too, like a dulled part of her brain all lit up like a tower of sparks, electricity surging through new neural passageways where there was potential for things that were different and greater and now attainable, now, finally, possible. This was the beginning of a new life, and one week into it David dumped her.

Lizzie and David landed in London at seven in the morning, local time. From Heathrow they boarded the Piccadilly underground line, which to Lizzie's delight, terminated in a stop called Cockfosters.

"Well, that is obviously the best," Lizzie said.

"What?" said David. "Oh. Sure."

David celebrated his thirty-fifth birthday not long after he and Lizzie settled in a Belsize Park flat. David's sister Becky volunteered to plan a birthday party, which Lizzie acceded to since she knew nothing about England or the things that were done in it. Becky's idea was to meet David's friends for a Sunday roast in a fancy Hampstead pub, then to adjourn for a walk in fancy fancy Hampstead Heath. His friends, besides Becky, included a Scot, Connor, who David described to Lizzie as a "good egg." It was important to appreciate that he was Scottish, because David had drilled into her on the flight the distinctions and intersections between the United Kingdom, Great Britain, England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and Lizzie hadn't totally internalized it all yet, but she did know not to refer to Connor as English, because for as good an egg as he was, that would be really bad, just really bad, just pure dogshit. There was another friend, Ian, about whom David said there was nothing worth mentioning.

That small crew was already at the pub when Lizzie and David arrived. Becky got up from the table and greeted Lizzie with a hug.

"You're from the States!"

"Yeah," Lizzie said. "Wyoming." Over Becky's shoulder she noticed a sign pointing to an upstairs 'Romney Room,' which struck her as strange.

"I don't think I know anything about Wyoming! What's it like?"

"It's..." Not the very first thing she wanted to talk about. "It's like... it's like nothing. It's literally nothing."

"It can't be like nothing," Becky insisted. "What would you do - what would I do if I went there, what would you recommend?"

"I don't know. You kind of have to make your own fun. I don't know if you're outdoorsy, but yeah, you can go up to the mountains, or to Yellowstone, to hike, and you can hunt or fish or whatever, or you drive around. There's a lot of open spaces and forests and mountains stuff like that. Really just a lot of that stuff. People, not so much."

"Wow, it sounds kind of exotic."

"It's - sure."

Ian stood up too, and shook Lizzie's hand. "What do you think of Obama," was the first thing he said to her.

"I don't know."

Ian nodded. "Interesting."

Connor spent most of his time with Lizzie asking what she'd done in London so far, recommending what she should be checking out, and both hyping up, and apologizing for the absence of, somebody called Tara. Tara was another of David's long-time friends who Lizzie, it was promised and underlined, would love. Tara, Connor explained, was tied up with other things and running late.

"You're going to love Tara," Connor said. "You're really going to get on. She's proper Yorkshire."

"Oh yeah?" Lizzie did not know what that was.

"You can take the lass out of Yorkshire, but you can't take Yorkshire out of the lass. That's what we all say."

"What does that mean?"

"It means that even though Tara doesn't live in Yorkshire anymore, there are still things she says and does that are very typical of a Yorkshire resident."

"Oh. That's cool."

"Yes."

David told Lizzie that it was her round - the 'round' being a British concept he'd never thought to explain to her before putting her on the spot. He stood up and sent her off to buy everyone drinks. She gripped his shoulder and, in a low voice, asked whether this was going well. Sure, definitely, David said. "I'd like if we didn't only have to talk about me being American, though," she said. "I'd like if that wasn't the one thing that everybody found interesting about me."

At the bar Lizzie brutalized the names of English porters and ales but was mostly understood. "Where's that accent from?" the bartender asked.

"America," she said, resigned.

"What state?"

"It's, uh, Wyoming."

"Right - I've been there! Went up Mount Rushmore."

"I don't think so, that's not in Wyoming."

"I don't know... are you sure? Because that's definitely where I saw it."

"Pretty sure..."

It took Lizzie two trips, without help, to bring the five pints back to the group, and on the last trip there was a new woman at the table, sitting where she'd been sitting. Tara was talking to David and fondling a pack of cigarettes. Tara, who was also frankly just gorgeous, got up to let Lizzie squeeze past. Lizzie sat back down next to Ian, who had another question about Obama.

Tara, interrupting, leaned over the table. "So what's Wyoming like?" she smiled, which, thought Lizzie, are you kidding me with this.

"It's one of the other square states," David answered for her. Lizzie shrugged, like, she didn't feel like talking about it anyway, right? "It's not worth... tell me more about Madrid!"

"He keeps trying to push me off the subject!" Tara laughed. "Lizzie, you've got to let me know what it's really like; he's just never going to tell me!"

"I mean... what do you want to know?"

"Tell me something interesting about Wyoming. What would impress me?"

David shook his head firmly. "Nothing. Nothing about Wyoming is going to impress you." Lizzie eyed David coolly, like, okay, so this is what's happening now?

"Well, I don't know," Lizzie frowned, "there's something, probably. Like, I read a thing a while ago that said that there's only two escalators in the state, only two escalators."

"How is that possible? Isn't Wyoming huge?" Tara laughed again. She inched closer towards Lizzie.

"Yeah, it is, but still, yeah - I mean because the terrain's all so flat, I guess? - there are only two escalators in all of Wyoming. Yeah, apparently that's been the case forever. Although actually there used to be two and a half for a little bit, because my sister Ellie used to work in a call center and she said that in their building they had an up escalator, but no down escalator. So I guess that means there needs to be both an up escalator and a down escalator for it to be considered a full escalator. Like they can only come in pairs. I don't know. But anyway, that up escalator broke and it was never fixed, so now there are only those two escalators. Or four escalators, I mean, depending on how you define it, I guess, I don't know, I'm not the president of escalators."

Ian shook his head. "I can't even imagine."

"Can you imagine London running with only two escalators?" said Tara.

"Well, it wouldn't be running at all, would it?"

"That's exactly my point."

"It really says it all," muttered David, wiping beer off his mouth with the back of his hand. "It's really so small town provincial, isn't it? Wyoming is twice the size of England and there's not a thing there."

"There are things," Lizzie said, drinking her pint and keeping her eyes on him.

"But how on earth could Wyoming end up with two escalators? I mean, it sounds like a joke." David looked over at Tara, who glanced down at the table and smiled.

"Well, I don't know, David," Lizzie said, and if he had been looking at her instead of Tara he would have seen his girlfriend's heart sink.

"But there must be a reason," he said.

"Well, I don't know, David. I guess we just fucking like stairs a whole lot. You've been to Wyoming, you know how wild we are about a fucking staircase." Lizzie went on to make up some bullshit about Wyoming's powerful stair industry and the brutal lengths it goes to in order to keep the escalator business out of the state. "And I mean, you laugh," she addressed the silent table in conclusion, "but people died." This weird digression didn't any good kind of reaction, and Tara turned back to David, her black locks blocking off her face from Lizzie, and then Ian, meaning it somewhat kindly, suggested that the British don't 'get' Americans' humor.

"And vice versa," he added. "I don't think Americans get our humour. British humour is more... they're quite different. English humour is a bit more about language and wordplay and irony and also very black, very wickedly black humour. From what I understand, American comedy is more slapstick, a bit more broad?"

"I don't know."

Two days after that, David summoned Lizzie into the breakfast nook and told her that he knew this would be hard to hear but he thought it was time they stopped seeing each other. "You're just not who I thought you were,"

he offered, and then, when pressed for further explanation, said, "You ruined my birthday."

"We should definitely break up then, because you're a 35 year old man who just said I ruined his birthday," Lizzie shot back, in her mind, a week later. At the time, she tried to look at him like he was pathetic and beneath notice, and managed to spit out "I don't know why I was stupid enough, or naïve enough to... whatever... whatever you need to tell yourself," and she hoped some of the words in there hurt him. She walked out of the flat, went around the block until she was out of view, and stood in a stranger's doorway and cried.

Lizzie moved her things to Becky's place. Becky denounced her older brother as "immature" and "a muppet", which confused Lizzie so much until Becky explained that it was a bad thing. Becky told Lizzie she could stay on her couch for as long as it took for her to sort out her move back to the States. She also made a point of letting her know that both Connor and Ian also thought David had behaved poorly and like a muppet, and they both liked Lizzie and hoped to stay in touch.

Lizzie moped around at Becky's for a few days, making short trips outside for sandwiches or coffee or to sit in a bookshop, until the self-indulgence turned into cabin fever. At night, when she dreamed, she stepped out of Becky's cramped East London flat room and into the back yard of her parents' Jackson home. She could see the peaks of the mountains from there. When she was a girl, her dad had taken her there with her big sister to show them how to hunt and camp, and she could see the slopes where she had switched from skis to snowboards when she was sixteen. Way beyond that, she could see the miles of road that she would drive on for hours at a time just to have something to drive on, the same roads where she and her friend Annie would get driven around by Annie's boyfriend, in his minivan, while they would drink beer in the back. She saw the little Chapel of the Transfiguration, north on 26, abandoned at night, with herself and Annie, legs crossed on wooden floor, Annie with the Ouija board in her backpack and wanting to summon a Cheyenne spirit, Annie getting upset and wanting to be taken home. The roads they would drive on again, around the 24 hour diners, Lizzie and Annie drinking coffee in a Formica booth until the hunters filed in at sunrise. And Lizzie dozing in the cot in the back of the van, watching the peaks of the mountains rock up and down through the rear window.

"I feel like Wyoming kind of poisoned my mind in this beautiful way," Lizzie told Connor late one night over drinks. "I keep expecting there to be mountains whenever I look up. Even if the mountains themselves aren't all that, that's not the point, it's that I have this phantom pain. It's weird that they're not there. It's not that I miss them, I don't. It's more like I need them to be there."

"I can show you mountains," whispered Connor, and kissed her. And then that was a whole thing.

Connor's problem, which he agonized over from the get go, was that his parents would hate Lizzie. Family's really important to me, he told Lizzie multiple times, and Connor's people were farming people. His parents owned some farm way out in the Highlands, where they lived in a custom-built estate with a ton of dogs that Connor grew up with and spoke of with wistful masculine fondness. Connor's parents would not respect Lizzie, who was American and therefore a City Girl, or Princess, whose shit did not stink and wouldn't know what to do with herself on a farm in her high heels. Connor's parents could only respect a girl like Connor's younger sister, Fiona, who worked on the farm and was so fit she could pick up a bale of hay and then do whatever you did next with a bale of hay, maybe just put it back down again. You're being ridiculous, Lizzie said - she did come from Wyoming, after all, which was like the most rural state in like anywhere, also Connor lived in London and if he tried to lift a bale of hay at this point he would probably die. Connor only shook his head. No, she didn't get it.

When they went north, it was for a weekend, and there were mountains, and Lizzie was out of London - yes, she thought, this is amazing! Connor's parents were pretty wary of her, sure, but far from hostile. More passive-aggressive than anything, with firm conditions on her stay - like Lizzie and Connor sleeping in separate bedrooms and Lizzie eating huge, bloated Scottish meals. You're a growing girl, Connor's mother insisted to Lizzie, scraping extra meat out of a tub onto her plate. More than you've eaten in a year I bet, Fiona joked through a mouthful of meat. Connor remained quietly on edge at all times.

In the afternoons, Lizzie took long walks through the farmland and watched the horses graze in the stables. I bet you've never been on a horse before,

Fiona had told her. On Sunday, with Lizzie hiding from the family in the stables, one of the horses went into labor, which was sudden and gruesome and the worst thing Lizzie had ever seen. Lizzie called out for help but there was nobody around. I have to deliver this baby horse, she told herself, and knelt down on the hay beside the pained thoroughbred, and searched for the phrase "deliver horse" on her phone. It took her a while to find anything because the cell reception was so terrible, and by the time she did the horse had died anyway. When Fiona came back and saw this she screamed, and then the rest of the family came running and everyone screamed, basically, except for Lizzie who was still on the floor looking at her cellphone and had horse blood on her jeans. That was the end of the thing with Connor.

Becky sat on the arm of the couch one night and told Lizzie, more firmly than gently, that she wouldn't be able to stay much longer. Becky had flatmates, she reminded Lizzie, and at this point she was really just testing their patience and it was their flat as much as hers, etc. When are you going to go back, she asked. Lizzie didn't know. Are you thinking of going back to your old job, she asked. Lizzie didn't know.

"You have to do something, Lizzie, it might as well be the thing that you want to do." Lizzie nodded. "I'm here. I'm offering to help you now. This is my actual job, Lizzie. What would you like to do, what would you be really happy doing?"

"I think..." started Lizzie, and then said the rest of the words without actually thinking about them, "I'd be good at doing something creative - maybe I would do writing, like travel writing? I could tour places, like... Argentina, or... even the UK, and talk about things like restaurants in little towns and go to Stonehenge during the solstice and that sort of thing, and write articles about the people that I meet. And maybe because I'm American that's an advantage, because I have this outside perspective. Something like that. I think. Would people pay me to do that? I think I would be really good at that."

"OK, what makes you think that? I have to ask that."

"Just... I guess..."

"Have you done that before, do you have any experience?"

"Not really."

"Well, what do you have experience in?"

"I don't know, just working at a ski resort. Renting ski equipment and that kind of thing."

"Do you want to do that again? And don't say 'I don't know.'"

On the last day before Lizzie flew home, the winter in London was finally cold enough to wear the clothes she wore in Jackson every day. For a thing to do, she bought a ticket to the Tower of London, where she joined a walking tour guided by a middle aged man who was dressed in period guard clothing and acting like it was the sixteenth or seventeenth century, except with rules about flash photography. He directed everyone to a couple of ravens pecking at the grass on the Tower Green, and explained the ancient but persisting superstition that if these six ravens were to flee the Tower, both the Crown and Great Britain would fall. All the ravens' wings had all been clipped to prevent this. Which struck Lizzie as unfair bullshit, and she wondered if she could stash any of the ravens in her winter coat and sneak them out. Lizzie tried making eye contact with one of the ravens, who squawked at her and turned away.

"Don't think about touching those ravens, now," the guide warned her loudly, above the murmurs of the crowd.

"I'm not."

"There is to be no touching or feeding of the ravens of the Tower. Otherwise, you may find your stay in the Tower to be... somewhat longer than you may have planned!" The crowd chuckled appreciatively.

"I'm not even looking at these ravens."

"The Crown will let you off the hook this one time, madam! Where are you from?"

"Wyoming."

"Ah." He mulled that over for a bit. "An unfamiliar... I don't believe the Yeomen Warders are familiar with that land!"

"Yeah, yeah."

"Wyoming... ah, one of our American settlements! The new world! And how fare, uh, His Majesty's settlers? What news do you bring of Jamestown?"

"It's good, we have a ski resort, so, good."

"Excellent! His Majesty will be quite pleased that the Crown's investment in America has been fruitful - I predict a long and prosperous relationship between our countries, free of any trouble whatsoever!" This got another small laugh from the group.

"I don't think so," Lizzie said. "Actually, I predict a rebellion. I think we're going to rise up and rebel against you."

The dude in the befeater costume feigned profound shock. "You're launching a revolution?" Again the group laughed.

"Yeah, a revolution."

"My goodness. A revolution? On what possible grounds?"

"I don't know," Lizzie said. "Because we'd be sad if we didn't."

The guide broke character and looked at Lizzie like, give me a break, why are you doing this to me, and was about to respond with something period-appropriate when he spotted a kid on the tour squeezing his arm through the railing within pecking distance of a raven, and politely shouted something about not doing that. The kid's mother yanked her son's arm away and hectored him thoroughly, and since it seemed like that might go on for a while, Lizzie stuck her hands in her coat and left the group. At the bottom of her coat pocket her fingertips touched the Equality State magnet that Justin had given her, which she took out, examined, and then, without thinking about her reasons for it, threw it onto the green for the ravens. She left the Tower walking briskly, and then full on running, over the drawbridge, her open coat flapping behind her and the wind twisting and pulling her long hair up towards the spires.

The morning after, very early on the morning after, Lizzie jerked two large suitcases containing all of her things up and down flights of stairs at tube stations and eventually dumped herself in a gum-stained seat on a Piccadilly train bound directly for Heathrow. She kept her head down in the carriage, and increasingly all the landmarks of London passed her by, overhead and unseen, all moving beyond her into the distance where they locked into place as pieces of a postcard skyline. Lizzie was sleepy and didn't think about that and kept her eyes on her shoes until she came to the airport, where she looked around at flights to Berlin and Rome and Paris and Athens and Barcelona, and it struck her that she had in her two hands a passport and everything she owned in the world, and that the first time in her life those places were only hours away, and she could go to any one of them, or pretty much anywhere she wanted, and nothing was stopping her and nobody would even know.

"Jackson Hole Mountain Resort," she said, "this is Lizzie speaking. Oh. Okay."

She held out the receiver over her shoulder. "It's for you."

Justin picked it up. "This is Justin," he announced. "Oh. Hey bro."

Over the radio Lizzie listened to some fill-in announcer let everyone know that the school was closed, as if that wasn't obvious from the heaving snowfall outside; the worst weather that Lizzie had ever seen. Lizzie leaned over the desk, by the cash register, wearing holes in the elbows of her maroon uniform. For whatever good it did. Nobody had been in the store all day.

"Yes sir," said Justin. "Yes sir." He hung up the phone. "Bill wants me to help clear the roads, I'm gonna head down. Can you keep an eye on things here? I doubt anyone's even going to come in, but maybe."

Lizzie slouched further onto the desk. "Yeah, okay."

"So how was London?" he said, putting on his jacket and gloves.

"It was fine."

"What was the absolute best thing that you did?"

"I don't know."

He stopped to look at her for a second, then shook his head. "Who even... I don't know what to say to you sometimes."

Lizzie looked up from the desk vaguely. Justin paused again before closing the door. "Let me know if you want to get a drink later," he said, and left.

Afterwards, Lizzie stayed quiet for a long time. Then, straightening back up, she grabbed a mug of coffee on the desk and threw it as hard as she could at the window.