

Extinction Poems

By Erin McFadyen



1.

A friend says to me that she misses those times we used to watch *One Planet*. We used to come together in the evenings to watch *One Planet*, in our common room, looking out across the gardens of Clare College. Remember the larkspur disappearing blue into the blue night. Recall the famous shower of pain, the nerves fizzing out of our bodies and into the common, watching these blues trickle down. Attenborough crosses the Ol Pejeta Conservancy; years prior he walks amongst the wolf's bane at Clare, bootprints bruising little scenes of missing in the grass. Take this down. He stands between two Northern White Rhinos, his hands silently upon them. Nobody in the common room says anything; our faces are facing the blue light. Wolf's bane is also called leopard's bane, or blue rocket. Try to remember this. I search for a clip to send this missing friend, something to remind her of the good times. YouTube commenter Yogesh Arya writes: "Imagine being the last of your kind and not even being aware of it." Now *One Planet* has expired on the streaming platform of my choice.

2.

There's a poem you might like by Mina Gorji, called "Night Garden." Read it and think of black ink like petrol pumped into the sky, questions to fill the expanding question-space between the stars. Negativity, which is distinct from nothing: "here and there / bright snips of jet." Read this night poem in the night and listen to the construction on your block. They're building a rooftop garden. The hum of the excavators, burrowing into the hard planet which also hums as it is ground away; the text in your hands growing like a vine but never signifying more or more clearly. Building predicated on loss. Backhoe loaders. Trenchers. All the bookshelves on the block buzzing in anticipation of their own emptying into the sky, the glamorous cracking of their spines. Talk about the heartbeat of the city's nightlife. On this purported rooftop garden they're building beehives—funny little constructions, predicated on the building-up of gaps: *The Entire Bee Movie but every time it says bee it speeds up by 15%*.

3.

Take a screenshot, whatever, note it down; cradle this rapid-palimpsest-obliteration in the crook of your elbow, like a cat. I tell my friends: I miss you; certainly we've missed each other, and we will. *BBC News* says a state of State extinction by 2050 without urgent action, according to an "inquiry." How long it takes to articulate a loss which beams through time; how long it takes to approach something that fragile. Take them down in numbers: 100,000, 43,000, take a screenshot. What's up with roadkill. What's up with grief. Glittering on the kerbside, dew on it in the morning, fine like a voice from another room. Get out of the car and cradle it, make a brace with your arms, let it lick you if it still has the strength.

Image: "[White Rhino](#)" (CC BY 2.0) by [slkhan](#).