

A Given Moment

A text score by
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You come to consciousness slowly as you condense into being. You are a water droplet orbiting high above the earth. The atmosphere is thin here, but you don't know any other life. All around you droplets are coming into being, singing a joyful song of becoming. Just as you feel yourself fully form, a pull comes from below.

You start falling, first slowly, then accelerating towards the ground. It's frightening as the atmosphere gets thicker around you as you speed towards the earth. Suddenly you change shape becoming crystalline. You float gently and are able to see other flakes around you, a confused babble settles into a new understanding.

Other flakes join you, and you become an ensemble, floating in the air, spiraling lazily downwards. This is the first time you feel truly happy, surrounded by others, catching thermals, rising and falling.

Suddenly there are no more thermals. You can make out the details of the ground and you see many other flakes ready to greet you. You're a little afraid, but you and your friends come to rest gently on the roof of a house. There are many others here, discussions of your lives and travels so far travel up, down, and across the layers of snow.

The weight of the snow above you gets heavier, but it isn't a bad sensation. You feel even closer to the other droplet/flakes but still retain a sense of self. The press gets harder and harder, and suddenly you are liquid again. Like a kid you see how fast you can race down the roof – other droplets are cavorting like children rolling around each other.

You feel yourself slowing down and stretching out – the surface below you is slick and you can barely hear the droplets below you. You feel they are trying to warn you, but when you try to ask why you get stretched to your limit, and then you are frozen in place. Muffled screams escape your throat as you try to warn your friends, but they don't understand and come piling on top of you.

Days pass and you become accustomed to this new life. You can't even hear the screams of the droplets on the outside – you are ensconced in a crystal palace. Life is silent for the first time, and you stop worrying about your friends as you sink into a deep stupor. When the sun comes out, you wake up briefly and shine brilliantly; it is almost like being in the upper atmosphere again, but you swiftly fall back asleep.

One day the sun has been shining for so long it wakes up even the droplets deepest to the core. There is a kind of humming sound as the water molecules take up a hymn to the sun.

CRACK.

The entire group is falling through the air. There is mass confusion, then a thunk. News from the droplets on the exterior slowly gets transmitted to the center – we are among friends. There are flakes here, we are safe.

You fall back into your slumber. Day, weeks pass and you start to feel the outer layers leaving. It's like regaining a sense you almost forgot you had. You start to hear birds and squirrels, cars and people talking. A heater turns off and on. You wonder what it will be like once you go; no one has ever come back to say what happens next.

You are finally on the surface of the icicle, surrounded by earth and droplets. You start to feel the downward pull of the earth again, but you don't understand why. Slowly you make your way between rock and earth, burrowing into the land. The sound is different here, the smallest vibration transmits for miles and you can hear the oceans calling your name. As you tunnel deeper and deeper your sense of self starts to disappear again, you don't notice but you are dividing into smaller and smaller units. The ocean sings a lullaby and you are at peace.

Listener's Guide

We had gorgeous icicles on our house this winter, one morning for my meditation, I tried to sonify the life of a water droplet in the icicle. Sonify the story above, in your head. If it helps to use your voice, go ahead, but I'm interested in the way the perception of the droplet changes, not just the droplet's own sounds. Think of the mass, weight, volume and material of the sound. What matters are your own reactions when moving through the states at a given moment.

1. What does it sound like in the upper atmosphere? When you first come into being, how aware of the world around you are you? Is it easy to distance yourself from the outer domain? How would a million songs of becoming, all around, near and far sound?
2. How does sound change as the atmosphere gets thicker? Do you think a droplet changing into a snowflake makes a sound? How does a snowflake hear differently than a droplet?
3. What does the ensemble of flakes sound like? Do they shout in excitement as they go up and down in the air like children on roller coasters?
4. What does it sound like on the roof of the house? How does it change as the flake gets covered?
5. Does it make a sound when the flake becomes a droplet? How is this sound different from the sound in the atmosphere when the droplet became a flake?
6. What do droplets cavorting like children sound like?
7. What do the muffled screams sound like? How do your own muffled screams sound to you?
8. What is it like to experience silence for the first time? How does it feel not to be sounding for the first time?
9. What does a crystal cathedral of humming droplets sound like from the inside?

- What does it sound like from the outside?
10. What does the crack sound like from the inside? What does is sound like from the outside?
 11. What does it sound like as the icicle falls through the air? When it reaches the ground is it more of a sound or a feeling?
 12. How does it feel to regain your senses? How slowly can you imagine regaining your sense of hearing?
 13. What does it sound like below ground? How far are you from the ocean? What does the ocean lullaby sound like? How does it feel to divide into peace?

Once you have sonified each question, sonify the entire experience without looking at the score.