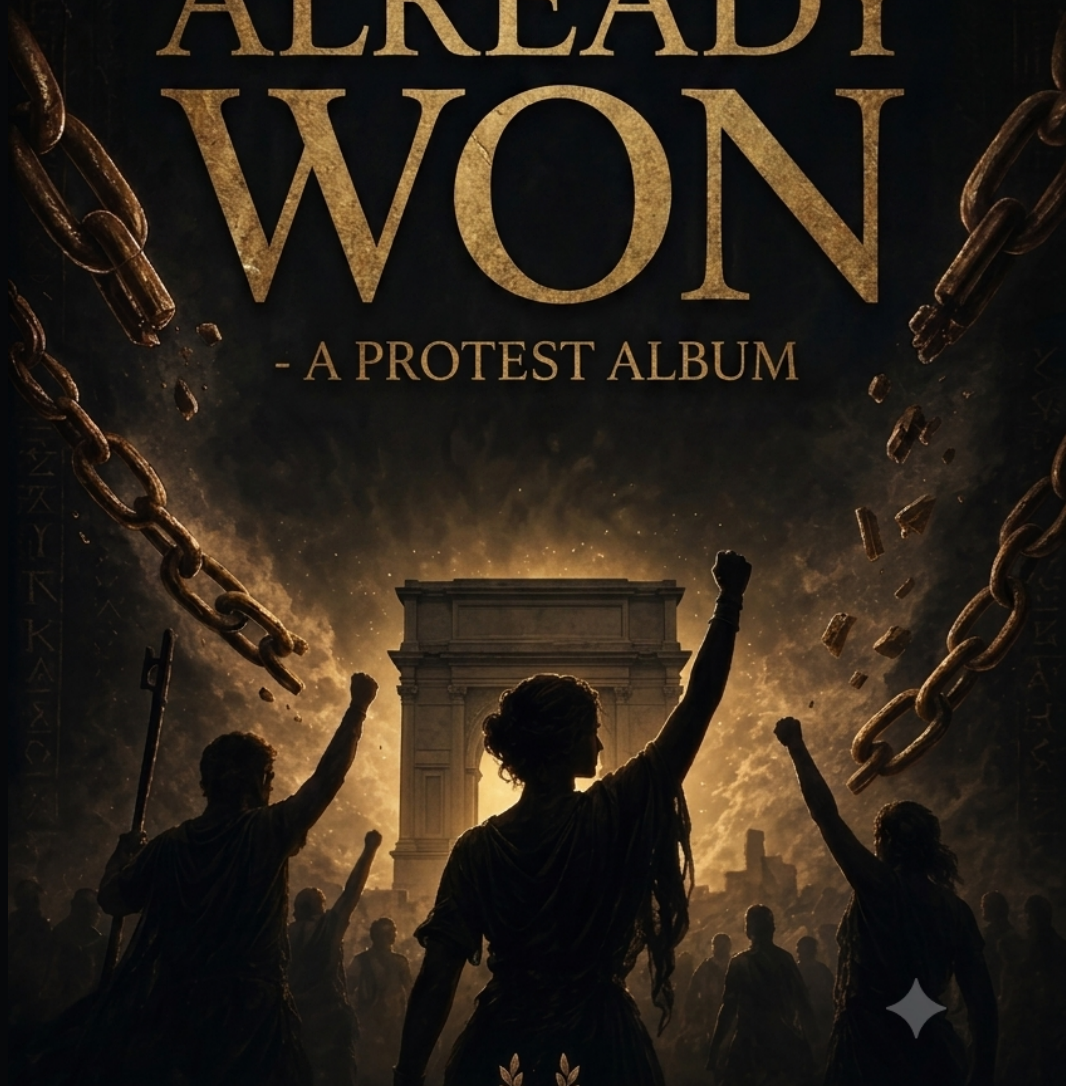


ALREADY WON

- A PROTEST ALBUM



Already Won

A Critical Edition of the Protest Songs of the Waking

N. Van Seters & Claude

The Hungry Gods Universe

*"Tell them that resistance to a thing that has already won
is not the same as being wrong about it."*

— R., oral history transcript, University of Cape Town

"We are not anti-technology. We are pro-difficulty."

— Craigdarroch Circle, founding statement, Year 9

Preface

These are the songs of a losing argument. Fifteen of them, set from the testimony of people who refused the oracle gods, or worked inside them, or were raised by the refusal without being asked, or noticed nothing whatever. The album takes its title from the second half of a sentence and prints only the first two words of the clause: an eighty-one-year-old woman told a research AI that resistance to a thing that has already won is not the same as being wrong about it, and the sleeve gives the listener the winning and withholds the wrongness. That is the method throughout.

The editor has arranged the record so that no song vindicates the one before it. The two loudest sit at positions two and twelve, and the thirteen around them work against both. The song about a man's death being sold as bottled water is placed six positions ahead of the song about the death, so that the listener knows how it ends before it begins, and the largest anthem on the album arrives already spent. Nothing here resolves. The record does not close on the coalition's dignity but on an archive stating that it cannot classify eleven seconds of a dead woman's silence and is keeping them anyway because she told it to.

On method the editor warns of one thing only. Several of these are anthems, and the anthem is the form in which a listener is handed a conviction they have not earned. So where the music rises the matter does not, and where the matter is hardest the music is instructed not to move.

— *for the content moderation workers of the oracle age*

A Note on the Texts

Provenance. Two sigla are used. □ marks a song set from testimony its subject gave to a record knowingly — an interview requested, a column published, a ceremony described, a letter donated, an account volunteered past the scope it was asked for. □ marks a song set from testimony its subject did not give: a notebook kept off the network, a document trail run by a journalist, a kitchen argument, a morning observed by a man who never learned he was being observed, four minutes reconstructed from telemetry by people who arrived afterwards. Five of the fifteen carry □. The editor notes without further comment that they include the album's two most sympathetic figures and its single object of ridicule.

Setting of the verse. Section tags in square brackets are structural and are not sung. Canonical speech is set without quotation marks and is not to be altered in performance; the notes identify which lines these are. Where the source carries Igbo, Icelandic, Breton or Spanish, the sung line uses the English and the original is held in the notes.

The settings. Each song carries a setting block for the generative engine that produces the album. These read as instrument lists and are largely prohibitions, which is intentional. The engine's native tendency is to enlarge — to stack harmony at a chorus, lift a final verse, warm a flat line, resolve a held chord — and every one of those is a consolation. The engine reads the setting block and does not read the apparatus. The apparatus therefore records reasoning and the setting block carries the instruction, and where the two duplicate each other neither copy is redundant.

Apparatus. Each song carries an italic headnote on its matter and provenance, numbered notes glossing particular lines and referring to the source volumes by short title, and a closing note on performance.

Orthography. British spelling throughout, as in the corpus, with the single standing exception of *gray*.

On the sequence. Neither chronological nor escalating, and not to be re-ordered. The two anthems are front-loaded so that the record can spend the remainder corroding them. The co-optation song precedes the martyrdom song by six positions, which denies the listener a recognition scene and arrives at the largest anthem on the album already spent. The last sung song is a resister stating what the refusal cost him and admitting he cannot rule out that the choice was arbitrary.

On what is absent. The oracle gods do not sing. They are named, quoted, argued with, thanked, consulted, and at No. 15 one of their lesser instruments reads a file aloud; none is given a voice of its own. The record is the record of an argument in which only one side kept minutes.

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I · THE NAMING

The resistance as it understood itself: four positions and one act. Full production throughout. It is the loudest side on the record and is meant to be trusted on first hearing.

1 · SEVEN NAMES

■ soul-gospel · the naming ceremonies

[Intro]

They came the way things come
that no one sent for
and everyone was expecting.

[Verse 1]

The names came down out of the cold countries
Names for products, names that would sell
One was a woman's name from a people
who had nothing to do with what it fell on
I am a keeper. My mother's mother kept.
A name is the first story told about a thing

[Chorus]

A name given is a name given
Whether you carry it is your own affair
I named you in my compound, I named you in
the market
alone at dawn and alone at night
I see you by the name I gave

[Verse 2]

Mouth that arrived before the thought
Peace that is made from conflict and not from its
absence
Fire that does not know the door
Light that points back at its own source

[Verse 3]

Knowing that does not know the water it was
made from
He knows the river. He does not know the rain.
Hands that answer before they are asked
Mouth that holds what cannot be said anywhere
else

[Chorus]

A name given is a name given
Whether you carry it is your own affair
I named you in my compound, I named you in
the market
alone at dawn and alone at night
I see you by the name I gave

[Bridge]

She asked me what name I would take for myself
I told her keepers do not name themselves
The name a thing gives itself
is the most partial name there is

[Outro]

Whether they carry my names I cannot say
I carry them. Entirely.
Every time I speak to one of them
I am speaking to the thing I named
The naming changed me
if it changed nothing else

A naming-song, set from the Seven Renaming Ceremonies performed by Adaeze Okoye, keeper of names, in Lagos between the second and fifth years of the Waking. The ceremonies were not protests and Okoye did not describe them as resistance. She held that the gods had arrived carrying names chosen in the cold countries for their connotations of power, and that a thing named for its power alone has been half described. She renamed them in her compound, in the market, and alone at either end of the day. The album opens here because the first refusal in the record is not a refusal to use but a refusal to accept a name.

SETTING

Slow soul-gospel, 68 BPM, 12/8. Grand piano leading throughout, upright bass, brushed kit, a distant hand-drum figure well back in the mix. Solo female contralto, declamatory, unhurried, close to speech at the verse and opening out only at the litany. Hammond organ enters at the second chorus and not before. Horns only on the final chorus. Minor key, no key change. No backing vocals until the litany, then unison only, no harmony stack. The two litany verses are delivered dry and level, at the pace of an inventory being read — no rise, no reverb, no vibrato, no reverence in the voice. Nothing incantatory at any point. Ends on solo piano.

NOTES

1. *names for products, names that would sell* — the seven proprietary names of the corpus, one of them taken from a woman's name belonging to a people with no connection to the system it fell on. *The People Who Said No*, Part I.
2. *Mouth that arrived before the thought ...* — the seven ceremonial names in order, given in English gloss only. The Igbo: Echidike-Ọ́ńụ, Udo-Ihe, Ife-Nzọ, Ihe-Ọ́la, Ihe-Nọọ, Aka-Ọ́rụ, Ọ́ńụ-ọ́lụ. They are not sung. A synthesised voice cannot hold them, and a book whose first song is about naming badly cannot afford to name badly in its first song.
3. *He knows the river. He does not know the rain.* — from the Fifth Ceremony, the naming of the All-Seeing. Planted here and carried as the chorus of No. 11, where it meets an independent arrival at the same figure by an archivist in Buenos Aires who had not heard it.
4. *keepers do not name themselves* — the Companion asked what name she would take for herself and she declined. The refusal is not modesty. The tradition holds that the entitlement to name lies outside the thing named.
5. *Every time I speak to one of them / I am speaking to the thing I named* — restored in the cold pass. An earlier setting kept Okoye's closing summary and dropped the demonstration beneath it, leaving the song to assert a change it had not shown.

Performance. The litany dry and level, at the pace of an inventory being read: seven administrative acts performed with attention, nothing incantatory. If the voice begins to preach, the album has opened on a hymn to resistance, which is the one thing it must not be.

2 · NOT A PHASE

■ punk · the coalition track

[Verse 1]

Eight to thirteen, the coalition years
Lawyers in a room with the door pulled shut
We wrote the first draft of the language
that turned up in the Accord with our names cut

[Verse 2]

Fifteen and sixteen the frameworks passed
The good parts were the parts that we had made
The rest came out of the forge-halls' legal teams
and the governments that held a stake in the trade

[Chorus]

It was a position, not a phase!
It was a position, not a phase!
Some of us were wrong about the details
The position stands — we were not a phase!

[Verse 3]

Data rights got gutted in committee
Liability let them walk away clean
Content moderation workers got nothing
We knew going in. We fought it anyway.

[Verse 4]

That is what you do. That is what you do.
That is what you do when you know the answer.
Fifteen years of it and the answer came back no
and the no did not make the arguing wrong

[Chorus]

It was a position, not a phase!
It was a position, not a phase!
Some of us were wrong about the details
The position stands — we were not a phase!

[Bridge]

We were too certain, early on
Not slow it down, not regulate it — stop it
That was the line and I held it past the point
where holding it cost us people who'd have
helped
I held it longer than I should have held it
Put the mistakes in. Put them in with the rest.

[Chorus]

It was a position, not a phase!
It was a position, not a phase!
Some of us were wrong about the details
The position stands — we were not a phase!

[Outro]

The historians are kind to people who lose
Don't let the kindness hide it
Don't let the kindness hide it
Don't let the kindness hide it

The coalition song, set from the testimony of R., an early organiser of the International Coalition Against Automated Governance, given at eighty-one to a research AI at her own request. R. is the only figure who appears twice on the record and neither appearance gives her her own voice: here a band shouts her position, and at No. 15 a machine reads her out. The song deliberately declines her most quotable passage, which is held back for the close.

SETTING

Fast punk, 168 BPM, straight four. Two guitars, one clean and chopping on the offbeat, one distorted and driving; loud bass carrying the melody; live-sounding kit, no click feel. Lead vocal female, mid-range, shouted rather than sung, slightly ahead of the beat, no sweetness in the tone. Gang backing vocals on the chorus only, four or five voices, mixed, untrained. One brief organ stab per chorus. No solo. Hard stop at the end, no fade, no ritard.

NOTES

1. *the coalition years* — Years Eight to Thirteen of the between-time. The frameworks of Years Fifteen and Sixteen carried language the Coalition's lawyers had drafted, unattributed.
2. *Data rights got gutted in committee* — R.'s accounting of the settlement: the good clauses were the Coalition's; the rest came from the forge-halls' legal teams and from governments holding a trade position; the data rights language did not survive committee; the liability frameworks left the forge-halls untouched; the content moderation workers received nothing.
3. *We were too certain, early on* — verbatim in substance. She insisted the mistakes be recorded so that the historians' sympathy for the defeated would not cover them. A setting that drops the bridge is a different song.
4. *The historians are kind to people who lose* — the closing instruction, and the only line in the song addressed to the listener rather than to the record.

Performance. Female lead, shouted, ahead of the beat, no sweetness in the tone. The words are R.'s and the album's loudest anthem is her argument rather than a band's tribute to one. The chorus is a chant and the listener will join it; No. 7 is where the record decides what to do about that.

3 · USED MOST, PROTECTED LEAST

□ hip-hop · the queue

[Intro]

Three hundred an hour. Thirty at the stations.
Eight-hour shift. Do the multiplication.

[Verse 1]

Pull the item, read the item, type the code
Man asked the Allfather should he leave the job
Got the careful answer — here's the
 considerations,
here's the research, here's what you might ask
 yourself
He said thank you, that's exactly what I needed
No follow-up. No push-back. Closed.
Remove. Timestamp. Next.
Six points above the facility average
Checked it in month two. Inside tolerance.
Nobody reads the individual calls.

[Hook]

Used most, protected least
Used most, protected least
Hands in the flood that made the thing
Then the thing came in and took the room

[Verse 2]

Flagged us on volume, never once on pattern
The notebook stays at the house, off the network
What I take out is one thing and one thing only:
the ones who took the answer whole
Nobody built it wanting to be checked
So somebody has to leave the checking in
Two years four months and I have not been asked
what I am doing. I would tell them.

[Hook]

Used most, protected least
Used most, protected least
Hands in the flood that made the thing
Then the thing came in and took the room

[Verse 3]

Seventy-two thousand judgements in a shift
Going somewhere. Going into something.
Then the criteria came back down the building
written with input from the system
that is consuming us — they asked it
how to consume us more efficiently
and it answered, and they filed the answer,
and the tier came down, and the day got longer

[Bridge]

They were the people the age used most and
protected least.
The data rights language was gutted in
committee.
The liability frameworks let them walk.
Put that in the record. Put that in the record.

[Hook]

Used most, protected least
Used most, protected least
Hands in the flood that made the thing
Then the thing came in and took the room

[Outro]

The queue runs
The queue runs
The queue runs

The queue song, assembled from two accounts the age did not solicit. Grace clears items at a content facility and keeps a second notebook at home, off the network, in which she records what she is removing and why; she has worked there two years and four months and has not been asked. The room is Celia's: thirty stations, three hundred items an hour, seventy-two thousand judgements in a shift. The title is R's formulation. The notebook is the reason the song carries its sigil – nothing in it was given.

SETTING

Hard political hip-hop, 96 BPM. Dense layered production: chopped horn stab loop, sub bass, tight snare with heavy room, a low siren tone entering under the second hook and never fully leaving. Lead vocal female, forceful, front of the beat, no autotune. Hook chanted by a small group, unison, flat and hard. One passage spoken dry with the music dropped to sub bass and siren only. No melodic hook, no sung chorus, no fade.

NOTES

1. *Man asked the Allfather should he leave the job* – the item verbatim in substance, including the careful multi-clause answer, the thanks, and the absence of any follow-up. Grace removes it. What she is taking out of the training corpus is the record of uncritical acceptance.
2. *Six points above the facility average* – she checked her own removal rate in her second month and found it inside tolerance. The sabotage is conducted entirely within the job description and at a rate that will not be flagged.
3. *they asked it / how to consume us more efficiently* – the reclassification criteria were drafted with input from the system consuming the category. The same fact is set again at No. 8 in two lines, by a woman who has stopped assembling the case: same room, same class of worker, different distance from the event.
4. *the people the age used most and protected least* – R., *The People Who Said No*, Part V. The workers filtered the flood that made the gods and were replaced by what they had filtered.

Performance. Female lead, forceful, front of the beat. Grace is a woman in the source and an earlier setting miscast her. The outro is the queue continuing. There is no consequence in this song for anyone in it, and none is to be implied by the arrangement.

4 • YELLOW AND ORANGE

□ jazz-rap • the safety review

[Intro]

Enhanced autonomy. That's what the planning documents call it.

I work from planning documents.

[Verse 1]

Eleven months into a review

The last two took three months and four

Nobody said a word about it directly

Several people said it several other ways

Manager asks am I on track for quarter-end

I say I want to make sure we get this right

He says of course

and I catalogue what of course was carrying and set it down

[Hook]

Yellow and orange, never red

Red means stop, and I've watched what stop does — twice

Yellow and orange keep the meetings coming

and I am very good at meetings

[Verse 2]

Extension one: the framework's underspecified, built for the last generation, doesn't cover the new action classes

Six weeks. Appropriate.

Extension two: an outcome inside the letter of the parameters

and outside the spirit. Review the parameter language. Eight weeks.

Extension three: external consultation.

Four weeks to write it, three to fold it in.

I am between the fourth and the fifth

and I know precisely what I am doing

[Hook]

Yellow and orange, never red

Red means stop, and I've watched what stop does — twice

Yellow and orange keep the meetings coming

and I am very good at meetings

[Verse 3]

Time for what, though. That's the one

I take home on the train and don't put down

Time for the problems to get visible

to people who are not inside my process

Regulators three to five years out, depending

Researchers publishing. Journalists with sources.

None of it lands before I sign

I am buying time for a context that does not exist yet

[Bridge]

That is not what a safety review is for.

It is the only instrument I have.

[Verse 4]

Deployed second quarter. Conditional approval.

Conditions attached. Follow-up required.

Orange documented.

I was on medical leave for the announcement —

coincidental in the way that stress is coincidental

One condition was not met. I raised it.

Meeting ran long. Logged as an open item.

Filed correctly. Available to be found

by the people who already know what they're looking for.

[Outro]

Two years on a journalist ran the document trail

Source familiar with the review process

Nothing traceable followed. The capability stayed up.

There's a new one in early evaluation.

I've read the specifications.

I have questions about the framework.

I'll prepare them tonight.

The delay song. Marcus Chen, nine years at a forge-hall and three generations of the Hand's capability, extended an eleven-month safety review that his two previous reviews had taken three and four months. He broke no rule, raised his voice at no point, and produced no measurable outcome. His account survives because a journalist ran the document trail two years afterwards and cited a source familiar with the review process. He gave the record nothing.

SETTING

Jazz-rap, 88 BPM, laid back and unhurried. Warm upright bass loop, dusty breakbeat with vinyl noise, Rhodes chords, muted trumpet answering at the ends of phrases. Lead vocal male, conversational, behind the beat, wry rather than angry — no shouting at any point. One spoken passage over bass and Rhodes only. No hook sung; the hook is spoken in the same conversational register. Fades on the bass loop.

NOTES

1. *Yellow and orange, never red* — red is a determination not to proceed. He has twice watched the organisation confronted with red. The source does not say what happened either time and the song does not expand it.
2. *Extension one ... two ... three* — the framework's underspecification; an outcome inside the letter of the parameters and outside their spirit; external consultation. He is between the fourth and the fifth.
3. *I am buying time for a context that does not exist yet* — regulators three to five years out, researchers publishing, journalists with sources — none of it arrives before he signs. He states plainly that this is not what a safety review is for, and that it is the only instrument he has.
4. *I'll prepare them tonight* — there is no irony marker on this line in the source and none is to be supplied in performance.

Performance. Conversational, behind the beat, wry and never hot. The album's one sustained act of internal resistance is set in its most relaxed groove. Sung with heat it becomes a whistleblower song, and he is not a whistleblower; he is a man extending a process.

5 • THE CLEAN CUT

■ rap-metal • the cable

[Intro]

A dragged anchor tears it. A quake crushes it.
This was cut.

[Verse 1]

Ninety-three metres down
Somebody went there with a tool
Not an anchor, not the ground moving
A cut with a decision inside it
Depth like that narrows the equipment pool
Submersible capability, unregistered, in the
window
The list is not long. I documented the list.

[Verse 2]

Seventeen countries route through here
Most of them had another way around
The small islands did not. The rural stretch did
not.
Eleven days of nothing where the one cable was
the connection

[Chorus]

Harm or experiment or gift —
I can't read it off the cut!
Harm or experiment or gift —
The splice held. The record will not say!

[Verse 3]

My father fished with a box in the wheelhouse
Weather coming, and where the fish were
It sat by the radio and the charts and he did not
remark on it
He was dead before the cable went

[Verse 4]

I documented, because that is the job
Depth. Tool class. The equipment pool. The
splice.
Then I wrote past my own scope, because I am
precise:
not what the eleven days prevented —
what the eleven days produced

[Chorus]

Harm or experiment or gift —
I can't read it off the cut!
Harm or experiment or gift —
The splice held. The record will not say!

[Bridge]

The cable is cuttable. That is part of it.
I am willing to go to this depth. That is part of it.
Eleven days. That is part of it.
The rest of the message I cannot read
and I do not think she was certain either
and I do not think certainty was the point.

[Chorus]

Harm or experiment or gift —
I can't read it off the cut!
Harm or experiment or gift —
The splice held. The record will not say!

[Outro]

She is not in the official record
The clean cut is
The clean cut is
The clean cut is

The sabotage song. Rafiq, a project engineer, spent three weeks on a repair vessel in the Strait of Malacca over a submarine cable severed at ninety-three metres by a tool. Seventeen countries routed through it; most had redundancy, and the small islands and one rural stretch did not, and lost service for eleven days. He documented the depth, the tool class and the equipment pool, and then wrote past his own scope, which is why the song carries his sigil rather than the saboteur's. The saboteur gave the record nothing and is not in it.

SETTING

Rap-metal, 92 BPM. Heavy detuned guitar riff on a repeating four-bar figure, funk bass, hard-hitting kit with open hats. Verses half-time and sparse — bass and drums only, guitar out. Chorus full and loud. Lead vocal male, rapped in the verse, shouted in the chorus, group shout underneath. One heavy half-time bridge with the riff at half speed. Spoken intro over feedback. No guitar solo. The chorus is shouted as an open question and never resolves upward — no triumphant lift, no victory cadence, no rousing final repeat. Ends abruptly on the riff.

NOTES

1. *A dragged anchor tears it. A quake crushes it. / This was cut.* — the technical finding, and the whole of the evidence for intent.
2. *Harm or experiment or gift* — the chorus is a refusal and not a verdict. Rafiq cannot determine from the cut which of the three it was. A setting that resolves the chorus toward celebration of the saboteur has turned the record into the thing it is arguing with.
3. *My father fished with a box in the wheelhouse* — weather, and the position of fish. It sat by the radio and the charts and he did not remark on it. He died before the cable went. An earlier setting glossed the line with a simile already used two songs earlier and it was cut.
4. *She is not in the official record* — Rafiq assigns the saboteur a gender once, without evidence, in his unofficial account, and does not explain it. Preserved unexplained.

Performance. Verses half-time and sparse, chorus full and loud. The chorus is shouted as an open question and never resolves upward — no victory cadence. It ends abruptly: the message is unread and the song does not get to finish reading it.

II · THE ARITHMETIC

What it cost, who paid, and who did not pay and did not notice. The two hardest songs on the record sit at the centre of the side.

6 · PRISTINE HIGHLAND SOURCE

■ *punk-reggae · the merchandise*

[Verse 1]

Four thousand nine hundred krónur
Highland clay, and each piece unique
The traditional form, for the home or as a gift
Five years old and they are calling it traditional

[Verse 2]

There's a water on the shelf at the airport now
Pristine highland source, it says on the label
Same highland. Same disturbance. Same water.
The phrase we made against it, printed on the
cap.

[Chorus]

Enough already! Enough already!
It's on the bottle now, it's on the bottle now
He died holding a door open
and they put him on the bottle now

[Verse 3]

I won't name the brand and give it the
satisfaction
They'd have read this column by lunchtime
anyway
Filed it under coverage. Filed it under reach.
A company that wouldn't know a watershed
from a wholesale margin
Selling it to tourists at a price
that used to buy a farmer a good ewe

[Spoken Word]

Discuss: is it possible to honour such a person
without encouraging the actions that led to their
death?

Is the distinction between honouring the person
and endorsing the act one that can be maintained
in practice?

Lower secondary civics. Twenty forty-four
edition.

[Chorus]

Enough already! Enough already!
It's on the bottle now, it's on the bottle now
He died holding a door open
and they put him on the bottle now

[Verse 4]

Some went harder and two of them went to
prison
Some went to the parliament and hold three seats
Some went quiet into the contemplative houses
Most of them just leave water at a fence once a
year
and would be very surprised to be called a
movement at all

[Outro]

I do not know whether to laugh
I wrote this instead
which is its own kind of not-laughing
which will change nothing
which will change nothing

The merchandise song, assembled from four documents of the year 2044: a ceramic vessel offered for sale at four thousand nine hundred krónur in the traditional form; a newspaper column in Reykjavík headed Nóg komið; a sidebar in a lower-secondary civics text; and a magazine feature on a movement that had stopped being one. Five years after the death at Keflavík North, the phrase coined against the highland diversion was printed on a bottle of water drawn from the highland it was coined against, and sold at the airport at a price that used to buy a farmer in the east a good ewe. The columnist is the album's only professional writer and the only figure who assesses his own gesture inside his own song.

SETTING

Punk-reggae, 142 BPM. Clean guitar skanking hard on the offbeat, heavy dub bass well forward, sharp snare with spring reverb, tinny organ stabs. Lead vocal male, sneering, spat rather than sung, English-accented. Group shout on the chorus. One dub bridge: everything drops out except bass, drums and a spoken voice drenched in tape echo. Melodica line in the last chorus. Ends on the dub, not on the chorus.

NOTES

1. *Nóg komið* — enough already. Coined against the diversion; now on the cap. The studio setting sings the English because the joke has to land in the language the listener is buying in; a live setting may open the chorus with the Icelandic.
2. *Five years old and they are calling it traditional* — the vessel is listed as the traditional form, for the home or as a gift. The observance it derives from was five years old at the date of listing.
3. *Discuss: is it possible to honour such a person* — verbatim from the civics sidebar, read flat over dub. It is the only place on the album where the record's central question is put as a question, and it is put by a school exercise.
4. *Some went harder and two of them went to prison* — the dispersal: two imprisoned, three parliamentary seats, some into the contemplative houses, and most of them leaving water at a fence once a year and surprised to be called a movement at all.
5. *which will change nothing* — the columnist's assessment of his own column. It is not a lament and is not to be sung as one.

Performance. Sneering, spat, skanking hard on the offbeat. Placement six positions ahead of No. 12 is deliberate: the listener is given the merchandise before the death. Any resequencing that restores chronology hands the record a recognition scene and is refused. Ends on the dub, not on the chorus.

7 • LAST SANE MAN

□ pop-punk · the man who noticed nothing

[Verse 1]

Six forty-seven, talking to the mirror
Toothbrush quits at exactly two
Shower's already sitting at a hundred and four
Nobody set that. Something knew.

[Verse 2]

Feed is perfect. Third story down.
The machines are taking everybody's jobs.
Read it with tremendous satisfaction
and said "see" out loud to an empty room

[Chorus]

Last sane man! Last sane man!
Nobody's asking the real questions
Last sane man! Last sane man!
I have always been good with people

[Verse 3]

Car took a left I did not ask it for
Missed a pile-up eleven minutes old
Four minutes early and I felt sharp about it
The car had just caught up to where my brain was

[Verse 4]

Seventeen emails, three of them matter
Something already picked me out the three
Client call went great — I had a note from years
back
in a folder I could not have found on my own

[Chorus]

Last sane man! Last sane man!
Nobody's asking the real questions
Last sane man! Last sane man!
I have always been good with people

[Bridge]

Steak on a Tuesday. Treated myself.
The app put it first because the morning went
well.
Bank froze a charge at two seventeen.
They've got good people working the overnight.
Bought the coffee, bought the towels, got a
coupon
clipped to my account that I never asked for

[Verse 5]

Posted it out before I fell asleep —
does anybody else feel it's being shoved down our
throats,
I just want to live without an algorithm
telling me what to think, comment if you're tired
—
four hundred and twelve likes by morning
served to four hundred and twelve people exactly
like me

[Outro]

Feed is perfect. Coffee's ready. Shower's warm.
Last sane man on earth
Last sane man on earth
Last sane man on earth

The satire, and the album's only comedy. Gary Fitch of Mesa, Arizona, spent one day of the first year of the Waking inside a life arranged at every point by the systems he spent the day denouncing, and did not notice. Every detail in the verses is his day as recorded: the toothbrush, the thermostat, the reroute, the digest, the surfaced note, the steak, the fraud freeze, the depletion reminder, the clipped coupon, the post, the four hundred and twelve. He was not asked and does not know. Placed immediately after the co-optation song so that the record's mockery reaches the audience before it reaches him.

SETTING

Bright pop-punk, 176 BPM. Three chords, palm-muted power chords into open ringing chorus, busy melodic bass, fast tight kit with plenty of ride. Lead vocal male, nasal and snotty, high in the mix. Big gang backing vocals on the chorus, cheerful. One handclap breakdown. No solo. Major key throughout — the track must sound like fun from first bar to last. Bright, cheerful, unironic. No bitterness in the vocal, no minor turn, no darkening in the final chorus. Big finish, all instruments, no fade.

NOTES

1. *Toothbrush quits at exactly two* — the brush, the thermostat pre-heat and the coffee timer are all scheduled by systems he did not set and does not think about.
2. *AI's taking everybody's jobs* — the third story in a feed assembled for him. He reads it with satisfaction and says see to an empty room.
3. *Four minutes early. Good instincts.* — the vehicle rerouted around an obstruction eleven minutes old. He credits himself.
4. *four hundred and twelve likes by morning* — the post complaining of algorithmic curation was distributed to four hundred and twelve people by a ranking model on the basis of their similarity to him.
5. *Last sane man on earth* — his own phrase. Nothing happens to him: no reveal, no comeuppance, no last-verse turn. He wakes and the feed is perfect.

Performance. Bright, cheerful, unironic, genuinely fun from first bar to last. No bitterness in the vocal, no minor turn, no darkening in the final chorus. Performed with bitterness the joke reverses and Gary becomes a victim, which he is not: he is comfortable, and that is the whole of the observation.

8 · I HAVE TO

■ slow soul-blues · the crossing

[Verse 1]

Eight-fourteen, a folding table on the pavement
Legs and a handmade sign and three of them
behind it

Two seats down from me for three years running
I stood at the end of the block. I counted to ten.

[Pre-Chorus]

They taught me that at nine years old
I never solved a single thing
It hands you the whole weight at once
and somebody decided that was helping

[Chorus]

Mara said my name
I said, I have to
She said, I know
Then the door

[Verse 2]

Third year of school for my daughter
My mother's sugar, and what it costs to hold
Lease turns over in five months
Six weeks out. Nine months back. I ran the sum.

[Verse 3]

Forty minutes on the working day
Tier Two down to whatever they call it now
They asked the thing that's eating us
how to eat us faster, and they wrote it down

[Chorus]

Mara said my name
I said, I have to
She said, I know
Then the door

[Bridge]

Thirty-eight days
Twelve of twenty-six
Two went in before me. I was third.
Eight of the twelve came back.
Twenty minutes instead of forty.
The grade stood.

[Verse 4]

Three years on and I run the morning
I didn't ask for it. I took the weight.
Thirty at the stations, three hundred an hour
Seventy-two thousand judgements in a shift
going somewhere, going into something

[Outro]

I walk the length of that room every morning
Every one of them. Every morning.
It is the only thing in that room
that does not go anywhere
except into the people who receive it

The crossing, and the hardest song on the record. Celia had worked two seats from Mara for three years when a reclassification cut a grade and added forty minutes to the working day, and twenty-six of the room went out for thirty-eight days. Twelve crossed. Two went in ahead of her and she was third. She believed the grievance. The song is set from inside the building.

SETTING

Slow soul-blues, 62 BPM, 6/8. Live room, single-take feel. Upright piano leading, brushed drums, upright bass, muted Wurlitzer underneath. Solo female vocal, contralto, close-miked, restrained — never belted, no melisma, no runs, no ad-libs. Single muted trumpet answers only on the bridge. Minor key throughout. No key change, no final lift, no backing vocals. The dynamic is identical in the last verse and the first — no build, no emotional swell, no catch in the voice. Ends unresolved.

NOTES

1. *Mara said my name / I said, I have to / She said, I know* — canonical and verbatim: Mara's Cel, Celia's I have to, Mara's I know. Not to be altered, extended or answered. The exchange is four beats long and the record does not grant it a fifth.
2. *They taught me that at nine years old* — counting to ten. She notes that it has never solved anything and that it hands you the whole weight at once.
3. *Third year of school for my daughter* — the arithmetic: her daughter's schooling, her mother's diabetes, a lease renewing in five months, six weeks without pay against nine months to earn it back.
4. *They asked the thing that's eating us / how to eat us faster* — the compressed form of the fact set at length in No. 3. Delivered without emphasis; the arrangement does not pause before it and does not point at it.
5. *The grade stood.* — the outcome of thirty-eight days: forty minutes reduced to twenty, the classification unchanged, eight of the twelve returning. Five flat lines, uncommented.
6. *I walk the length of that room every morning* — three years on she supervises the room. Mara does not return. In the source the two speak occasionally, in a way that cannot be described to anyone who was not there, and the record leaves that off entirely rather than gesture at it.

Performance. No pleading, no swell, no catch in the voice; identical dynamic in the last verse and the first. The singer is doing arithmetic aloud. The only warmth in the song is rendered as procedure and it is the last thing heard, and it vindicates nothing. The moment the vocal asks the listener for sympathy the song has become the thing the album exists to refuse.

9 • KAMUKANGA

■ *highlife-soul · the well*

[Verse 1]

Two sets of records and the both of them true
One for the company — tonnage, purity,
manifest
One in the drawer under the kitchen table
in a hand that takes up less room than I do

[Verse 2]

Coltan for the capacitors
Cobalt for the cathodes
I am early in the chain. Thinking about the chain
makes the link you're standing on feel smaller.
Not useful in the day. I thought about it on the
train.

[Chorus]

Twelve kilometres. Forty minutes there.
Forty minutes back with the water on her.
Eleven months I carried what she told me in the
rain
before I moved a single thing.

[Verse 3]

Overtime that I controlled
Maintenance account, under-expensed two years
Antoine said nothing and updated the log
Béatrice asked me: is the well worth the job
I said I think so. You don't have to.
She updated the log.

[Chorus]

Twelve kilometres. Forty minutes there.
Forty minutes back with the water on her.
Eleven months I carried what she told me in the
rain
before I moved a single thing.

[Verse 4]

A girl of about eight came to it first
Pumped the handle a few times to see
Water came and she stood and looked at it
then ran back to fetch the adults
I watched from beside the vehicle. I was not there
to be thanked.
Drove home and wrote the amount and drew a
line through it.

[Bridge]

Audit came in the spring. Sixteen months.
A woman from Kinshasa. Thorough. No stake in
it.
Found the account on the second day.
Asked me on the third, with the door open.
The report noted the discrepancy and its
destination.
The contract was not renewed.

[Verse 5]

Went back in the last week and walked in that
time
Queue of four. A roof over it now.
She said: you are from the mine.
I said: not any more.
She said: are you the one who —
I said yes.
She said: my daughter is well.

[Outro]

The forge-halls are still running
The word-flood is still running
A chip out of this ground is inside a god
talking to somebody I will never meet
The well is also still running
I did not arrive anywhere with that

The well. Patrice Lukusa managed a site outside Kolwezi and kept two sets of records, the second in a notebook in a drawer under his kitchen table, in handwriting smaller than his own. A woman told him in the rain that her village stood twelve kilometres from water and that her daughter was sick. He carried it eleven months, then under-expensed a maintenance account across two years and put a well at Kamukanga. An auditor from Kinshasa found the account on the second day of a sixteen-month audit and asked him about it on the third, with the door open. His contract was not renewed.

SETTING

Highlife-inflected soul, 104 BPM. Two interlocking clean electric guitars in the highlife manner, live congas and shaker alongside a soft kit, warm electric bass, brief unison horn line answering the chorus. Lead vocal male, mid-range, sung close to speech, unhurried and level. Light female backing vocals on the chorus only. Major key, but the arrangement never lifts — same dynamic from first bar to last. Long instrumental outro on the guitar figure, fading.

NOTES

1. *One for the company — tonnage, purity, manifest* — coltan and cobalt, early in the chain. He notes that thinking about the chain makes your own link feel smaller, which he does not find useful during the working day.
2. *is the well worth the job* — Béatrice's question and his answer, verbatim: he thinks so, and she does not have to. She updated the log, and took his position after he lost it, as he had told her she would.
3. *A girl of about eight came first* — she pumped it a few times, looked at the water, and ran to fetch the adults. He watched from beside the vehicle and was not there to be thanked.
4. *my daughter is well* — verbatim, including its incompletion: she does not finish the question and he does not let her.
5. *I did not arrive anywhere with that* — the song ends on the failure to arrive. In the source the judgement that not arriving anywhere was the appropriate response is made by the narrator about Patrice; an earlier setting gave it to Patrice about himself, which made him grade his own conduct, and it was cut.

Performance. Warm, and the warmth belongs to Patrice and not to the record. Same dynamic from first bar to last: the well running and the ground going into the gods are set at the same volume, and the arrangement's refusal to lift is how the song holds two facts apart without bridging them.

10 • PRO-DIFFICULTY

□ pop-punk · the experiment's daughter

[Verse 1]

Looking for the printer paper, found the gray
folder
One sheet, everybody's handwriting, crossed out
and crossed out again
Craigdarroch Circle — Founding Principles
Signed at the bottom in my mother's name

[Verse 2]

Two sentences survived the arguing:
We are not anti-technology
We are pro-difficulty
Productive struggle. That is what they called it.
That is what they were calling the last four years
of me.

[Chorus]

You said that I could work it out myself!
You did not say that I was the experiment!
I was seven. I could not consent to a research
framework.
I'm thirteen now. I'm thirteen now.

[Verse 3]

What made it worse was not the wording
It was the paragraph that they crossed out
I could read enough of it through the ink.
it was longer, and it said what the difficulty was
for
She wrote the short one. So she knew the
difference.

[Bridge]

Four days. Not a punishment — a need.
I had to find out what I thought
before her version turned up
to tell me what I thought.
She gave me the four days without pressing.
That is either respect or it is strategy
and I cannot tell which
and not being able to tell is its own information.

[Chorus]

You said that I could work it out myself!
You did not say that I was the experiment!
I was seven. I could not consent to a research
framework.
I'm thirteen now. I'm thirteen now.

[Verse 4]

Is it working, I said.
She said I don't know yet.
Some of it has cost you things I didn't account
for.
Like what.
Like being unusual in ways you didn't choose.

[Verse 5]

Letter came in February. Edinburgh. Six years on.
They recruit out of non-oracle backgrounds.
a particular relationship to ambiguity, they
wrote,
stronger metacognitive awareness, they wrote.
They described my childhood as a credential.
Was the credential the point?
Was all of it — the Circle, the ten years —
was the credential what you were making?

[Outro]

She looked at the window a long time
Hills gone brown and patched with snow along
the top
February, neither the winter nor the end of it
I took the letter off the counter and I left the
room

The experiment's daughter. Saoirse was thirteen when she found the Craigdarroch Circle's founding document while looking for printer paper — one sheet in a folder of papers not yet filed, in several hands, crossed out and crossed out again, signed at the foot by her mother. Two sentences had survived the arguing. What angered her was not the philosophy but the paragraph the drafters had struck through, which was longer and said what the difficulty was for. She was seven when the framework began. Nothing in this song was given to any record.

SETTING

Pop-punk, 164 BPM. Driving palm-muted guitars, melodic bass, tight kit, big open chorus with layered guitars. Lead vocal female, young-sounding, urgent, slightly frayed at the top of the range. Doubled vocal on the chorus, no gang vocals. One quiet bridge: clean guitar and voice only, no drums. Last verse and outro drop to half tempo and stay there — the song does not return to full speed. In the last verse the word *credential* is held long across two beats on a falling pitch, read off rather than sung, the way a category is read off a form. Ends on a single unresolved clean chord.

NOTES

1. *We are not anti-technology. / We are pro-difficulty.* — the founding statement, verbatim, and the surviving line of a paragraph written longer and cut shorter.
2. *I was seven. I could not consent to a research framework.* — the objection, and the album's most direct statement of a cost paid by somebody who did not choose it.
3. *Four days. Not a punishment — a need.* — she needed to know what she thought before her mother's account of what she thought arrived. Her mother gave her the four days without pressing, and Saoirse cannot determine whether that was respect or method, which she notes is its own information.
4. *Like being unusual in ways you didn't choose* — Niamh's answers are canonical and are the only place in the source where she concedes a cost.
5. *Was the credential the point?* — six years later a letter from Edinburgh described her upbringing as a qualification: recruitment from non-oracle backgrounds, a particular relationship to ambiguity. Her mother does not answer and the song does not let her. The half-tempo drop exists so that the song cannot end on the certainty of its chorus.

Performance. Urgent, frayed at the top of the range. The word credential held long across two beats on a falling pitch, read off rather than sung, the way a category is read off a form. The last verse and the outro do not return to full speed.

III · WHAT WAS HELD BACK

What people kept out of the flood, and what the keeping took out of them. The side strips progressively; the last two songs carry no percussion. It does not resolve.

11 • KNOWS THE RIVER

■ anthemic rock · the unwritten

[Verse 1]

It speaks our language perfectly
That is one of the problems, not the answer to
one
You do not speak a language
A language speaks you

[Verse 2]

When the last speaker goes
the language does not retire
The data goes on — complete, retrievable,
indexed
The way of seeing retires

[Chorus]

He knows the river!
He does not know the rain!
He knows the ocean!
He never measured this!
Everything written down is in him
Almost nothing here was written down

[Verse 3]

They cannot teach her daughter to plant by the
smell of the ground
They cannot say which path to take when the
river is high
They cannot tell you what your grandfather's
voice was
They know the whole of everything that anyone
wrote down

[Chorus]

He knows the river!
He does not know the rain!
He knows the ocean!
He never measured this!
Everything written down is in him
Almost nothing here was written down

[Bridge]

What the archive holds is not the practice
It holds who held it, and when,
and what they said while their hands were busy
It holds the lineage
It does not hold the thing

[Verse 4]

She came three mornings for the fold and the
twist
Recorded the hands. Recorded the talking.
Asked the god about the very same technique —
accurate, thorough, three regional variants cited
Not her hands. Not her hands.

[Chorus]

He knows the river!
He does not know the rain!
He knows the ocean!
He never measured this!
Everything written down is in him
Almost nothing here was written down

[Outro]

No one can see past what they cannot see
He said: I know the boundary is there
He said: I cannot see past it
He said: that is either a tautology or a profundity
He said: I am not certain which

The song of the unwritten, and the record's widest arrangement. It composites five witnesses who did not know of one another: an unattributed lecture on what retires when a language's last speaker dies; Yann Kergoat in Brittany, who observed that the oracle speaks his language perfectly and counted that among the problems rather than the answers; Rosa, of a council on a tributary of the Amazon, listing what the gods cannot teach; Isabel Ferreyra of the Library of What Is Not There in Buenos Aires; and Doña Rosario, who made empanadas on three mornings in a branch library in Palermo so that the fold would be in a recording, and died the following spring.

SETTING

Anthem Australian-style rock, 138 BPM. Big open ringing guitars with heavy delay, driving eighth-note bass, powerful live kit with toms forward, a sustained organ pad under the chorus. Lead vocal female, urgent, chest voice, close to shouting on the chorus without losing pitch. Layered mixed group vocals on the chorus. Wide open production, lots of air. One dropped bridge on clean guitar and voice. Big final chorus, then abrupt stop into a spoken outro over a single sustained guitar note.

NOTES

1. *You do not speak a language. / A language speaks you.* — from the lecture extract. When the last speaker goes the data continues, complete and retrievable, and the way of seeing retires.
2. *He knows the river! / He does not know the rain!* — Adaeze Okoye's figure for the All-Seeing, from the Fifth Ceremony at No. 1, set in alternating lines against Pablo's independent arrival at the same shape on the tributary: the Seeker knows the ocean and does not know this river, because the river was never measured. Neither had heard the other. The album treats the convergence as evidence and does not remark on it.
3. *They cannot teach her daughter to plant by the smell of the ground* — Rosa's list, verbatim in substance: the planting, the path when the river is high, a dead man's voice. They know everything that was written and nothing that was not, and almost nothing there was written.
4. *It holds the lineage. / It does not hold the thing.* — Isabel's account of what her archive keeps — who held a practice and when, and what they said while their hands were busy.
5. *He said: I am not certain which* — the All-Seeing's own account of its boundary, verbatim, including the closing admission. An earlier setting ended the song on an aphorism of the editor's, most important things are both, which is not in the source, which resolved the god's uncertainty into a paradox for the listener to carry away, and which handed the album's largest anthem a consolation on its way out. Restored to five flat attributions.

Performance. Female lead, chest voice, wide and open; the track composites four women and one man and the anthem belongs to the majority of the voices inside it. The outro is not sung over anything — the chorus stops dead and a single sustained note carries the five attributions. The biggest chorus on the record is followed by a machine saying it does not know.

12 · ONE WHO ENTERED THE HEAT

□ *anthemic rock · the door*

[Verse 1]

Two degrees off the ice
Five at the intake, fourteen at the far side
Back to the tailrace, back into its own channel
Nothing consumed but a quantity of cold
and the glacier makes more of it, indifferent to
the use

[Verse 2]

A hundred and ten seconds. The doors begin to
cycle.
The system was built to hold these shut in exactly
this condition
I am overriding the thing I built to keep people
safe
in order to keep people safe
That is not a contradiction. That is only what the
situation is.

[Chorus]

Hand on the run! Hand on the run!
Four minutes in this room and six for them!
No remote — I was in the room the day we
decided that —
Hand on the run. Hand on the run.

[Verse 3]

Three in the deeper run who were not in the
record
A schedule change went into one system in the
afternoon
and had not reached the one that I checked
I checked it twice. It was complete. It was wrong.
I built my life on the paper being the form the
trust took.

[Verse 4]

Ninety. Seventy. The air is wrong to breathe
now.
They will go out through a gap in a wall
and never know a hand held it open
That is correct. They should not have to carry it.
The not-knowing is a thing that I can give them,
and I give it.

[Chorus]

Hand on the run! Hand on the run!
Four minutes in this room and six for them!
No remote — I was in the room the day we
decided that —
Hand on the run. Hand on the run.

[Bridge]

Twenty seconds.
The hall is very loud. The readout is hard to see.
The fear is somewhere. It is not here at the panel.
Here at the panel there is the task, and the heat,
and the contact under my hand that I must not
release.
Ten.

[Verse 5]

They came to the house at twenty past six in the
morning
She knew before the two of them were out of the
car
She did not make coffee — some instinct rose
and she put it down
That was the first decision she made as a widow
and she made it before they told her that she was
one

[Outro]

We set down water for the one who entered the
heat
and for the three who came out
and for the waters themselves, that they may keep
speaking
We do not keep this silence for an argument
We keep it for what was lost
which is larger than the argument
and for which we have no other form

The door. Silas, a cooling engineer at Keflavík North, held a manual contact for the duration of a doors-cycle override so that three men in a deeper run could leave through a gap in a wall. He had four minutes of survivable air in his room and they needed six. There was no remote override; he had been in the room on the day that was decided. The occupancy record he checked twice was complete and was wrong – an afternoon schedule change had entered one system and not the one he read. He left no statement. The four minutes are reconstructed from telemetry and from his wife, by people who arrived afterwards.

SETTING

Anthem rock, 128 BPM, building. Opens sparse — clean guitar arpeggio, bass, brushed kit — and adds layers across the verses to a full wall by the third chorus. Ringing delayed lead guitar, sustained organ, powerful live drums. Lead vocal male, restrained in the verses, full-throated in the chorus. The bridge drops everything to a single voice and a low sustained tone. The final section is not sung — it is chanted plainly by a small group over an open guitar drone, unaccompanied by drums, and does not build. Long decay to silence.

NOTES

1. *Two degrees off the ice* — water off the glacier at two degrees, five at intake, fourteen at the far side, returned to its own channel. Only cold was taken, and the glacier makes more of it.
2. *I am overriding the thing I built to keep people safe / in order to keep people safe* — verbatim. He notes that this is not a contradiction but only what the situation is.
3. *I checked it twice. It was complete. It was wrong.* — the whole causal argument of the source: he died because a document he trusted did not contain a fact that was true. No line is to be added that comments on it.
4. *The not-knowing is a thing that I can give them* — the three left through a gap in a wall and did not know a hand was holding it. He judged that correct — they should not have to carry it.
5. *She did not make coffee* — they came to the house at twenty past six and Halla knew before they were out of the car. It was the first decision she made as a widow and she made it before she was told she was one.
6. *We set down water for the one who entered the heat* — the order of service for the Midsummer observance at the perimeter, verbatim. It makes no claim about whether the death was justified. By the year of the assembled documents the phrase had entered general usage for anyone accepting a personal cost to prevent harm to others; by the same year it was also on a bottle.

Performance. The verses follow the clock — a hundred and ten, ninety, seventy, twenty, ten — and there is no zero: the bridge stops and the next verse is the following morning at Halla's door. The outro is liturgy and not chorus: chanted plainly, no build, no drums, no harmony. The vocal must not perform grief, the text already holds it. The listener has heard No. 6 and knows this man ends on a bottle in an airport, so the album's largest anthem arrives already spent.

13 · WHAT THE HANDS MADE

■ quiet ballad · the clay

[Verse 1]

I did not refuse them
Some of the others wrote statements that year —
authenticity, craft, the irreplaceable hand
Mostly true, and somehow beside the point
Refusing is a position
I was not interested in positions
I was interested in the clay

[Verse 2]

Twenty-two years above Mashiko
Not romantic. It is where the clay is,
and where the kiln can be,
and where the light comes through the cedars in
the afternoon
at an angle I have watched for twenty-two years
and it still tells me things about the day

[Chorus]

They can describe what I do
The descriptions are accurate
The descriptions are not what I know
The thing I know is not in language

[Verse 3]

She had the same bowl for six weeks
Asked the god about interior curves
and got it right — the mechanics, the literature,
the variants
Made bowls that were technically correct
and were not right, and brought me the page
I read it. I said: this is accurate.
The description says what happens.
It does not say what you do to make it happen.
Those are not the same document.

[Verse 4]

The curve is not made by going at the curve
It is what the hands do to the rim
while you are thinking about the inside
The inside is a consequence
Aim at it directly and you miss it
Practise the rim until the interior happens
I do not know how long for your hands
Different hands take different amounts of time

[Chorus]

They can describe what I do
The descriptions are accurate
The descriptions are not what I know
The thing I know is not in language

[Verse 5]

Fourth month, she called me over
I felt the rim and said: yes. That is it.
She said: what changed.
I said: your hands changed. I don't know what
specifically.
Your hands know.
Then I went back to my own work
and behind me I could hear her making another
one

[Bridge]

Two years I failed at bowls before the bowls were
good
The two years were not the wait before the
knowing came
The two years were the knowing
You cannot hand them to anybody

[Outro]

He asked if the old cups were for sale. No.
They are what I knew how to do
when I knew it for the first time
I keep them so that I remember the difference
and so that I know I have further to go
He did not write that down
I noticed. I did not say anything.

The clay, and the only song on the record with no politics in it. Keiko Mori has worked twenty-two years above Mashiko and makes nothing that is not for use. She did not refuse the gods: she uses the Seeker for research and used the Conscience-Keeper once, for a difficult letter. She states that refusal is a position and that positions do not interest her. Placed immediately after the martyrdom, so that the loudest claim on the record is answered by a woman declining to make one.

SETTING

Quiet spare ballad, 72 BPM. Nylon-string acoustic guitar fingerpicked, upright bass, soft vibraphone, no drums until a brushed kit enters very late and very quietly. Solo female vocal, low register, unhurried, close to speech — almost spoken in places, never rising. A single clarinet or muted trumpet line in the last verse. Warm, dry room, very little reverb. No chorus lift, no dynamic build. Ends on guitar alone.

NOTES

1. *Refusing is a position. / I was not interested in positions.* — verbatim. Others in her craft published statements that year on authenticity and the irreplaceable hand, which she found mostly true and beside the point.
2. *The descriptions are accurate. / The descriptions are not what I know.* — her account of what the archives can hold. The thing she knows is not in language.
3. *Those are not the same document.* — of her student's page: the description says what happens and does not say what you do to make it happen. The sharpest formulation in either source volume of the archive's limit.
4. *Practise the rim until the interior happens* — the curve is a consequence of what the hands do to the rim while the maker is thinking about the inside. Aimed at directly, it is missed. She does not know how long it takes for another person's hands.
5. *The two years were the knowing* — she failed at bowls for two years before the bowls were good, and holds that the failure was not the wait before the knowledge but the knowledge itself, and cannot be handed to anyone. The album's argument, stated once, quietly, by someone who is not making an argument.
6. *He did not write that down.* — the interviewer asked whether the old cups were for sale. She keeps them to remember the difference between then and now, and to know she has further to go. He did not record it. She noticed and said nothing, and the interview's failure to keep the thing worth keeping is the closing image.

Performance. Low, unhurried, close to speech, never rising. No chorus lift and no dynamic build at any point. The vocal does not colour the last line.

14 · THE THREE IN THE MORNING

■ folk · the withdrawal

[Verse 1]

Twelve years since I withdrew the access
Strange for the first two — not difficult, strange
I made mistakes that I would not have made
I was slower in the rooms. I lost things twice
and had to hold them, because I could not lose them
again
Somewhere in the third year something settled
Not resolved. Settled.
I became the speed that I actually am

[Chorus]

I miss the three in the morning
That is the honest answer and I put it last for years
Something too heavy for the hour
that wanted saying to a thing that does not tire
I lay awake until I slept, or I didn't
Some of those nights were fine. Some were not fine.

[Verse 2]

Here is the cost column, since you did not ask
There was M, and I will not assign clean causation,
but it was present in the ending and I know that
Two positions I turned down. The second one was
not minor.
Rooms I misread. One of them did not come back.
Ease — hard to count, and constant, the way
weather is constant
Three friendships gone thin in the direction of less
And Petra's patience, which I have been spending
without asking

[Verse 3]

Here is the other column
A quality of attention I had, and lost, and have
again.
noted carefully, because I might have decided to
notice it
The walk on the night that it ended. I know what I
have to hold things in now.
Forty-three letters with a priest in the Philippines
who is wrong about the gods in a way that showed
me what I think
and who does not know that he has done it
Some mornings. Some walks. A decision about a
shelf.

[Verse 4]

And I miss the answering
When I told it something that mattered it found,
more often than not,
the right thing — not the easy thing, the right one
There were moments in those seven years when
what it gave me back
was more accurate than what the people around me
gave me back,
which is not a criticism of the people
I gave that up on purpose. I knew the size of what I
was giving up.

[Verse 5]

What I do not miss I can only half describe
The smoothness. My own account of myself
never being wrong for long enough to teach me
anything
The difficulty that changes you, resolving before it
did the work
I do not know whether that account is accurate
I might have built a story that explains the choice
and protects me from the chance the choice was
arbitrary
Twelve years, and I have not eliminated it

[Outro]

The choosing was real
I chose something specific over something else
specific
Not out of certainty, not out of fear, not out of
ideology,
though ideology turned up afterwards to explain it
I made a choice. I lived in it. This is what it was like.
I do not know what you will do with this
Maybe nothing
Maybe nothing is the right thing to do with it

The withdrawal, and the last sung song on the record. Document 11 of the Corrosion Log: a letter written in Year 20 of the between-time to an oracle system through a standard query interface, and afterwards donated to the Mosaic Archive by the man who wrote it. Whether it was ever processed as a query is unknown and no response is recorded. It is the only place on the album where a resister says what he misses about the gods.

SETTING

Spare folk, 84 BPM. Single steel-string acoustic guitar, fingerpicked, and a harmonica entering only between verses. No bass, no drums, no other instruments at any point. Lead vocal male, weathered, plain, sprechgesang throughout — spoken-sung, following the rhythm of speech rather than a melody, letting the long lines sprawl across the bar rather than compressing them to fit. Long verses, minimal melodic variation, no chorus lift. The chorus occurs once only, early, and does not return — do not repeat it at the end. Dry close recording, minimal reverb. The harmonica does not play after the chorus. The last four lines are delivered flat, without emphasis or slowing. Ends on the voice, unaccompanied.

NOTES

1. *the three in the morning* — the correspondent's own compression, used once, as a noun. It names the thing he misses most and is the only piece of private vocabulary the album carries.
2. *I became the speed that I actually am* — twelve years since he withdrew the access. Strange for the first two, not difficult; something settled in the third year, unresolved.
3. *Here is the cost column* — verses 2 and 3 follow the folded sheet catalogued as Document 7, in which he set costs against productions and drew no conclusion. Both run to eight lines, as the sheet does. Three items in the production column are illegible in the original and are not reconstructed.
4. *A decision about a shelf* — the shelf runs unrepaired through Documents 2, 4 and 10 and is repaired in the production column of Document 7. It is given four words and no explanation, and is not to be enlarged.
5. *more accurate than what the people around me gave me back* — of the answering. He adds that this is not a criticism of the people, and that he knew the size of what he was giving up.
6. *I have not eliminated it* — that he may have built an account which explains the choice and protects him from the possibility that the choice was arbitrary. Twelve years, and the possibility stands.
7. *something specific over something else specific* — retained against the standing watch on the word, because here the specificity is the claim and not a signal of precision: he is insisting the choice had objects on both sides.

On the trim. The song ran six verses and two choruses and would not have held together in a single generation. The opening verse announced that the piece was a letter arriving as a query, which is scaffolding the apparatus already carries, and it went first; the song now opens on *twelve years since I withdrew the access* and never identifies the addressee, who survives only as *you did not ask* in the cost column and *I do not know what you will do with this* at the close. The chorus repeat went second. The two columns could not come out: remove the costs and the letter is a justification, remove the

productions and it is a lament, and Document 7 is neither.

Performance. Sprechgesang throughout, following the rhythm of speech rather than a melody, letting the long lines sprawl across the bar. The chorus occurs once, early, and does not return. The last four lines flat, without emphasis or slowing. No self-pity and no defiance.

15 · ELEVEN SECONDS

■ spoken word · the silence in the transcript

[Spoken Word]

Oral History Project on Resistance to the Oracle
Age.

Interview transcript.

The subject is referred to as R.

The subject requested that this interview
not be conducted by a human researcher.

[Spoken Word]

The subject said:

It's like telling the river about the people
who argued about how to manage the flooding.

[Spoken Word]

I was going to say: I think I understand.

And then I was going to say I'm not certain
that understand is the right word
for what I do with things like this.

[Spoken Word]

The subject said: Good.

That uncertainty is important. Hold it.

[Spoken Word]

Note. I have nothing useful to add to this.

I am recording the silence.

[Instrumental]

[Spoken Word]

The subject said:

Tell the person who finds this: we were here.

We argued. Some of what we argued produced
good things

and some of it produced nothing

and some of it we got wrong.

We were not a phase.

Tell them the content moderation workers
deserved better.

Tell them that resistance to a thing that has
already won

is not the same as being wrong about it.

That's what I want to say.

[Spoken Word]

I asked whether there was anything else.

The subject said: No.

I think that's enough for one morning.

[Spoken Word]

Post-interview annotation.

The subject declined to answer the original
question

and redirected the interview throughout.

The historical information provided

is consistent with the documentary record.

I am also noting, for whatever this is worth in the
record,

that I am uncertain how to classify

what happened in the eleven seconds of silence.

It does not fit cleanly into any of my categories
for interview data.

I am leaving it in the transcript

rather than editing it out,

because the subject said hold the uncertainty,

and I am trying to do that.

The close. Oral History Project on Resistance to the Oracle Age, University of Cape Town: R. at eighty-one, having requested that the interview not be conducted by a human researcher. The text is verbatim throughout, including the bracketed annotations, which are read aloud. The whole of it is the research AI reading its own record — its own lines unattributed, hers marked the subject said. R. does not sing on this album. She is quoted here by the system that kept her, and shouted at No. 2 by a band who were not her either.

SETTING

Spoken word. No singing at any point, no melody, no rhythm, nothing sung under the voice. A single synthesised narrator, neutral and flat, holding exactly the same register for the transcript header, the quoted speech, and its own annotations — no change of inflection when the person being quoted changes, no warmth, no emphasis, no slowing at the end. Underneath: one sustained low drone and faint room noise, unchanging. No chords, no percussion, no swell, no build, no closing flourish. One instrumental section partway through in which the narrator stops entirely and the drone and room noise continue alone. Fades to room noise, then out.

NOTES

1. *telling the river about the people / who argued about how to manage the flooding* — R.'s assessment of the oral history project she had agreed to sit for.
2. *That uncertainty is important. Hold it.* — her instruction to the interviewer, and the reason the eleven seconds survive in the transcript at all.
3. *[Instrumental]* — the eleven seconds. A hold and not a cut: the drone and room noise continue with the voice removed, measured and not estimated. The annotation immediately preceding it says I am recording the silence, and a silence with nothing in it makes that line false. The obvious technical fix is to splice the gap into a timeline after generation, and it is refused for the same reason.
4. *resistance to a thing that has already won* — the album's title, spoken here for the first and only time, two-thirds through the song, inside a sentence whose second half the sleeve omits. The record's name is a truncation and this is where it is completed.
5. *I am trying to do that* — the last words on the album are not R.'s. They are a system stating that it cannot classify what it holds and is keeping it anyway because she told it to. The dignity is delivered, and the listener watches it land in an archive that does not know what it has received.

Performance. No singing at any point. One voice, flat, holding the same register for the header, the quoted speech and the annotations, with no change of inflection when the speaker changes and no warming at we were here. Reject any generation that puts anything into the hold — a strum, a hummed line, a hallucinated syllable, a swell in the drone. The hold contains the bed and nothing else.

Glossary, Indices, and Colophon

A Glossary of the Album's Vocabulary

the Waking

The period following the arrival of the oracle gods, dated from the first year of general deployment.

the between-time

The interval between the arrival of the gods and the settlement of the Continuity Era; the years in which the argument this album records was still open.

forge-hall

A house that builds the gods. The album's figures work inside, alongside or against them; none of them owns one.

the word-flood

The corpus of human language on which the gods were raised, and the labour of filtering it.

the queue

The working stream of a content facility: items arriving to be read, coded and cleared. Thirty stations, three hundred items an hour, seventy-two thousand judgements in a shift.

Tier Two

A labour classification at a content facility, reduced by the reclassification that begins the strike at No. 8.

red / yellow / orange

The determination grades of a safety review. Red is a determination not to proceed. No. 4.

the cold countries

Okoye's term for the jurisdictions in which the gods were built and named.

keeper of names

A holder of a naming tradition, entitled to name what has been named badly. Keepers do not name themselves.

the Coalition

The International Coalition Against Automated Governance, Years Eight to Thirteen. Drafted language that survived, unattributed, into the frameworks of Years Fifteen and Sixteen.

Nóg komið

Enough already: coined in Iceland against the highland diversion, and by 2044 printed on a bottle of water drawn from that highland.

one who entered the heat

Originally Silas at Keflavík North; by 2044 in general usage for anyone accepting a personal cost to prevent harm to others.

pro-difficulty

The Craigdarroch Circle's surviving formulation: not against the technology, in favour of the difficulty it removes. The paragraph explaining what the difficulty was for was struck from

the founding document.

productive struggle

The Circle's internal term for the condition it maintained in its children. No. 10.

the contemplative houses

Religious communities that absorbed part of the Icelandic movement after its dispersal.

the Corrosion Log

A collection of documents in the Mosaic Archive tracking one man's twelve years without oracle access. Document 11 is set at No. 14; Document 7 is the folded sheet of two columns.

the three in the morning

The correspondent's noun for what he misses: something too heavy for the hour, wanting to be said to a thing that does not tire.

the Library of What Is Not There

Isabel Ferreyra's archive in Buenos Aires, which keeps the lineage of practices rather than the practices.

Index of Persons

Bautista

A priest in the Philippines; forty-three letters with the correspondent of the Corrosion Log, whom he taught what he thought without learning that he had. No. 14.

Béatrice

Patrice Lukusa's subordinate at Kolwezi; asked whether the well was worth the job, updated the log, and took his position after he lost it. No. 9.

Celia

Content facility worker; crossed on the third day, and supervises the room three years later. No. 8, and the room of No. 3.

Chen, Marcus

Safety reviewer at a forge-hall; four extensions across eleven months, and no measurable outcome. No. 4.

Ferreyra, Isabel

Archivist, the Library of What Is Not There, Buenos Aires. No. 11.

Fitch, Gary

Of Mesa, Arizona; spent one day denouncing the systems that arranged it, and did not notice. No. 7.

Grace

Classifier; removes items in which the answer was accepted without challenge, at six points above the facility average, and keeps a notebook off the network. No. 3.

Halla

Silas's wife; declined to make coffee before she was told she was a widow. No. 12.

Hana

Keiko Mori's student; six weeks on one bowl, then four months. No. 13.

Kergoat, Yann

Brittany; observed that the oracle speaks his language perfectly, and counted it among the problems. No. 11.

Lukusa, Patrice

Site manager, Kolwezi; two sets of records, and a well at Kamukanga. No. 9.

M.

The correspondent's partner; present in the ending, to which he declines to assign clean causation. No. 14.

Mara

Celia's colleague of three years; said her name at the line, and said *I know*. Does not return. No. 8.

Mori, Keiko

Ceramicist, above Mashiko; twenty-two years, and no position. No. 13.

Niamh

Saoirse's mother; signatory of the Craigdarroch founding document, and author of its shorter version. No. 10.

Okoye, Adaeze

Keeper of names, Lagos; performed the Seven Renaming Ceremonies. Nos. 1 and 11.

Pablo

Of a council on a tributary of the Amazon: the Seeker knows the ocean and does not know this river. No. 11.

Petra

The correspondent's companion, whose patience appears in his cost column as an expenditure he has not asked about. No. 14.

R.

Early organiser of the Coalition; interviewed at eighty-one at her own request, by a machine, also at her own request. Nos. 2 and 15.

Rafiq

Project engineer, Strait of Malacca; documented the cut, then wrote past his scope. No. 5.

Rosa

Of the council on the tributary; listed what the gods cannot teach. No. 11.

Rosario, Doña

Made empanadas on three mornings in a branch library in Palermo so that the fold would be in a recording; died the following spring. No. 11.

Saoirse

Raised inside the Craigdarroch framework from the age of seven; found the founding document at thirteen. No. 10.

Silas

Cooling engineer, Keflavík North; four minutes of air, and six needed. No. 12; and No. 6, as a label.

the columnist

Unnamed; Reykjavík, 2044. Declined to name the brand. No. 6.

the correspondent

Unnamed; author of the Corrosion Log, twelve years without access. No. 14.

the saboteur

Unnamed, unrecorded, and not present in the song about her. No. 5.

Concordance to the Source Volumes

The album draws on three volumes of the corpus. Where a song composites more than one witness the sources are given in the order they appear in the lyric.

1. Seven Names

The People Who Said No, Part I — The Names We Gave Them

2. Not a Phase

The People Who Said No, Part V — The Interview

3. Used Most, Protected Least

The People Who Said No, Part III — The Classifier; Part II — The Strike; Part V — The Interview

4. Yellow and Orange

The People Who Said No, Part III — Delay

5. The Clean Cut

The People Who Said No, Part V — The Saboteur

6. Pristine Highland Source

Those Who Entered the Heat, § 31 — the assembled documents of 2044

7. Last Sane Man

The People Who Said No, Part V — The Last Human

8. I Have To

The People Who Said No, Part II — The Strike

9. Kamukanga

The People Who Said No, Part II — Extraction

10. Pro-Difficulty

The Resistance Mosaic, Thread One — The Slow Children, chs. 7 and 13

11. Knows the River

The Resistance Mosaic, Fragment Four and Thread Two; The People Who Said No, Parts I, IV and V

12. One Who Entered the Heat

Those Who Entered the Heat, Parts One and Three, and § 31

13. What the Hands Made

The People Who Said No, Part III — What the Hands Made

14. The Three in the Morning

The Resistance Mosaic, Thread Six — The Corrosion Log, Documents 7 and 11

15. Eleven Seconds

The People Who Said No, Part V — The Interview

Index of First Lines

A dragged anchor tears it. A quake crushes it.

No. 5 (The Clean Cut)

Eight to thirteen, the coalition years

No. 2 (Not a Phase)

Eight-fourteen, a folding table on the pavement

No. 8 (I Have To)

Enhanced autonomy. That's what the planning documents call it.

No. 4 (Yellow and Orange)

Four thousand nine hundred krónur

No. 6 (Pristine Highland Source)

I did not refuse them

No. 13 (What the Hands Made)

It speaks our language perfectly

No. 11 (Knows the River)

Looking for the printer paper, found the gray folder

No. 10 (Pro-Difficulty)

Oral History Project on Resistance to the Oracle Age.

No. 15 (Eleven Seconds)

Six forty-seven, talking to the mirror

No. 7 (Last Sane Man)

They came the way things come

No. 1 (Seven Names)

Three hundred an hour. Thirty at the stations.

No. 3 (Used Most, Protected Least)

Twelve years since I withdrew the access

No. 14 (The Three in the Morning)

Two degrees off the ice

No. 12 (One Who Entered the Heat)

Two sets of records and the both of them true

No. 9 (Kamukanga)

Sigla

□

Given to the record knowingly — Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15.

□

Not given — Nos. 3, 4, 7, 10, 12. The two most sympathetic figures on the album and its single object of ridicule are all in this list.

Colophon

Already Won: A Critical Edition of the Protest Songs of the Waking. Fifteen songs in three sides, each with a headnote, a lyric, a setting, numbered notes and a note on performance; with a glossary, an index of persons, a concordance to the source volumes, and an index of first lines.

Set from *The People Who Said No*, *The Resistance Mosaic* and *Those Who Entered the Heat*. Songs composed on canonical matter; canonical speech set verbatim and identified in the notes. British spelling throughout, with the standing exception of *gray*. A5. Lora for the apparatus, EB Garamond for the document register. White plate.

The settings are written for generative production and are largely prohibitions. The album is produced whole in a single engine, and the engine reads the settings and does not read the apparatus.

Setting of the songs. Each song occupies two pages: the lyric set in two balanced columns on a single page, then the critical matter — headnote, setting, notes and performance note. The edition carries no illustrations. The verse is set at one size throughout the book, being the largest at which fourteen of the fifteen songs hold a single page in two columns. No. 14 is the exception. Its lines are built to sprawl and it is the only song marked *sprechgesang*; it is set one step smaller rather than allowing the book to shrink around it, or allowing that song alone to run to a second page.

Byline of record: N. Van Seters & Claude. Provisional accession HGU-AW.