

Standing Still by Chip Livingston

1. I am standing still looking at the ground. The preacher reads holy words that mean nothing. There is no comfort spoken from the book that colonizes, oppresses, doesn't recognize you or me. They lower you into the ground and mother throws in your turtle rattle. She is holding on so tightly, she nearly forgets to let go.
2. She nearly forgets to let go and swings farther out than she means to. The shallow water reflects the same sun as the deeper, safer depths. Swinging shadows move as she falls, kicking legs wildly in a wheeling arc. Splashes with a crack, down then up again, exploding from the river where Pucv and all my relations bathed before we were civilized.
3. We were civilized in our fancy dress hotel. We were civilized with our martinis and white drugs. We were civilized as we signed the bar check with a number and went back to order room service.
4. Room service includes towels, trays, and trysts when you're snowed-in in Aspen during international gay ski week. It's the Pretty People Party and you're stuck there, with no way to get out, so you do what the pretty people do. You walk the halls, the dining rooms, the floors in your suite. You're too wired to stand still. You search the other guests like a vulture, looking for a body to occupy, to release your energy. The pent-up energy of all these gym clones is suffocating. The circling the stalking the desperation of Tom.
5. Tom bumps into me in an empty banquet room. What am I doing here he wants to know. Looking for the bar. Looking for you if you want to know the truth. Looking for fountains of Wayne. I need to walk this off, I say. The snow is intense. Tom invites me up to his room for a drink, to smoke some grass, to relax, maybe a massage. I'm too fucked to fuck, I say, even if you are a natural beauty.
6. Natural beauty doesn't do it anymore. It takes development, condos, theme parks, playgrounds. It takes power. It takes a handful of drugs and a scotch to wash it down. It takes a bump to get it up and, since coming isn't possible, a joint to get back to earth. I think I hear someone at the door. I hide in the bathroom, the door locked. I am shaking. I rinse my face with cold water. I try to blow my nose, waste all this good coke, but I can't breathe. 9,000 feet. Maybe it's the altitude.
7. Maybe it's the altitude, Tom says, but I think he says Maybe it's the attitude. Maybe it is, I reply, But everyone has it, the attitude sickness. Sick of granite gym tits, sick of E queens dancing with their dicks shrunk into their nuts, sick of Grievous Bodily Harm to get a rock off. Sick of Madonna's Don't Cry For Me remake.
8. Remake the land, remake the language. Make a new beginning with the beauty and the love and the goddess. Let us go into the light and start over. Medicine pouch around my neck and pockets full of crystals. Smoke the sacred pipe and send prayers to Mitakuye

Oyasin -- All My Relations. Buddhist chanting Hail Mary's inside a pentacle—astral traveling to Mecca. To Nirvana. To Galt's Gulch. To Aspen.

9. Aspen is the pinnacle of success for leather queens in furs. Fur is dead. Save the unborn transgendered Native American whales. Recycle, reuse, resurrect the dead. Here, let me hold your head. A bump of crystal will pick you up. You'll feel great. Are you throwing up? Maybe it's the altitude. You've got to develop a stomach for this. We might be stuck here till Thursday or Friday. I've got to get out of here, I say. You can't go anywhere. Nobody can go anywhere. Maybe you should get some rest. Do you want something? Let me see what I have.

10. I have about 45 minutes until you're covered with dirt, filled over with earth. Back to where we came from. You go where we're all going. I have 45 minutes left to join you. Jump in and Please God, Please alltheloveintheworld, Please take me with you.

11. With you beside me below me on top of me I could do anything. Do not leave me. Tears mix with rain and make a muddy grave. I hear you speaking through thunder. What's that? But I can't wait. I can't hear you. The wind blows the chain against the flagpole. We forgot to take the I-pledge-allegiance-United States-flag down when it started raining.

12. When it started, raining clouds covered the sun and the shadows stopped moving. I never looked up to see what moved between the sun and the grave, between the sky and where you were being lowered into the ground. I imagined it was eagles, wheeling above lending strength, carrying you to the spirit world in feathered arms.

13. Feathered arms marked by mourning, black bands wrapped tight around crow feathers. One-hundred crying wounds from mother's attempt to go with you. Wailing piercing screams of sorrow. Aunts, uncles, grandfathers rush to her side as the last shovels of wet earth cover you. The sun comes back suddenly warm. All your pagan gods. No Christian cross marks your permanent hotel. Just four flags in cardinal directions, and later a headstone. I thought we were only visiting but now you are flying far away.

14. You are flying far away and I am standing still.