

Mutant

by stephen hastings-king

The fallout came tangled with snow. We thought the sea would protect us. But it came from New Mexico greasy with Plumbbob's vaporized pigs.

When Life sent a photographer we let ourselves be dressed up in cowboy outfits. He arranged us in front of a sunset scrim among papier mâché Saguaro. We radiated health.

We became scientific data. They said records needed to be kept. But in the end we were not of much use. Everyone everywhere was impacted in the same way. There was no observer.

The mutant landscape is full of forgetting.

The shapes of successive regimes of radiation sickness pills and psychotropics repeat in details of our residential architecture. We associate them with pleasant sensations, find them reassuring.

We paint our buildings as mottled surfaces as if searching for the color of fallout.

Our region is known for producing a mechanical sea urchin, a proliferation of levers connected to an intricate network of lines and pulleys. It requires considerable craft to fashion but has no effects except on itself.

I watch the sun rise from inside an abandoned shipping container by the marsh amongst the papier mâché Saguaro, reading old Life Magazines and listening to hovering symphonies of birdsong. Foreground and background switch places and rearrange all the sounds in between. My hearing is a landscape of forgetting.

