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Landfill. More than a worker hired in October 2001 by Taylor Recycling Facility to supervise sifting machines at Fresh Kills Landfill. More than 1.5 million tons of rubble from the World Trade Center were deposited at Fresh Kills after the 9/11 attacks.

When we began our work sifting debris at Fresh Kills, we were told by a New York City Police Department official to spread the material out as thinly as possible, sift it, and get rid of it. There was, however, an enormous amount of steel in the debris that would have clogged our sifting machines. To prevent this, we had a worker running an excavator machine that pulled the steel out of the debris before it was sifted. Once we had removed the steel, a loader would scoop up the debris and dump it into our sifting machine. The sifter sorted through the debris with its "fingers," divided it into three streams of material (small, medium, and large), and placed the three streams on three separate conveyor belts. In addition to the conveyor belts, ready to look for human body parts, human remains, and personal belongings. Through this process, we found many human body parts, including bones, fingers, skulls, feet, and hands. I vividly remember finding a man's full chest and the entire body of a man still dressed in a suit. Personal belongings that we recovered included keys, wallets, pictures, and jewelry. Whatever body parts we found were put into buckets and taken to the medical examiners' area. The debris that was sifted by our machines down to one-quarter inch was known as fines. The Department of Sanitation took the fines from the conveyor belts, loaded it onto tractors, and used it to pave roads and fill in potholes, dips, and ruts. In the early months, we identified approximately two thousand bones per day. These numbers decreased toward the end of the job. I believe we found fewer body parts in the last months because we were sifting through the debris from the bottom floors of the World Trade Center, and the people who had been on those floors either escaped or their entire bodies were crushed, leaving no bones. The firm Phillips and Jordan had been hired to oversee the work at Fresh Kills. I was constantly told by my supervisors to "move the job," to run the conveyor belts faster, and to "keep the tonnage up," referring to the tons sifted per hour. One official did not let us drop below a certain quota of tons per hour; another did nothing but drive around the site all day, checking on our progress. Meanwhile, NYPD officers working along the conveyor belts kept telling me to slow the belts down so they could properly sift through the debris. Because only sixteen officers could work on each of our machines, other officers continued to sift through debris using rakes and shovels, until the end of 2001, when the temperature dropped to such a point that some of the materials froze.

MOVE THE JOB

From a March 19 affidavit in the case of WTC Families for Proper Burial v. the City of New York submitted by Eric Beck, a construction worker hired in October 2001 by Taylor Recycling Facility to supervise sifting machines at Fresh Kills Landfill.

My last assignment was to conduct surveillance of the weather and report that everything was fine. They set me up in an abandoned lighthouse several miles outside the city. The lighthouse stood in the center of a junkyard, atop a mound of mossy dirt. It was trumpet-shaped with inward-sloping walls. A stack of old sewing machines and broken pianos surrounded the dump. Local kids jumped from piano to piano, stomping the sour keys. Dogs chased them, barking. From the tower I couldn't hear, but I could see the kids jumping and the dogs chasing, their jaws snapping and the dogs barking. Behind them, a bomb went off. Through my headphones, I noted the rushing sound of radiation cruising low across the land. The father, who was driving, saw the mushroom cloud in his rearview mirror. The others didn't turn around, so they never noticed.

When they reached the campsite, the kids pitched a family tent. The father went inside, ripped up the flap door, and wouldn't come out. "I need time alone," he called. His family sat frowning around the picnic table. The father was laughing and moaning inside the tent. The sister shook her fists in his direction. The brother gave the tent the finger. The mother tore her straw hat off and stomped on it. She ground it into the dirt, right outside the flap door. The father heard the twisting feet of the mother. Coming out of the tent and seeing the hat on the ground, he said, "There's something I've got to tell you, but not in front of the kids."

THE REVISIONIST

By Miranda Mellis, from her novel of the same name, published in January by Calamari Press.
The mother said, "Why don't you let them hear it, too? We'd all like to know what you're doing in the tent."

"There's been a nuclear attack." Saying these words out loud had a strange effect on the father. He began running around and around in circles. Then he fainted.

Through my telescope, buildings were crumbling. The very air had faded, was pixelated. Inside one apartment building was an elderly woman. Her hearing aid was broken. She was watching the panic on television but could not understand what they were saying. She strained to hear them. She shook her head and wrung her hands. She knelt and prayed. Her prayers expired out of her mouth all over the carpet. She coughed up shards of bone and tiny blood-and-gristle-soaked figurines. She washed the prayer viscera in the sink and hung them from a clothesline outside the window.

Back at the camp, the father gave the children tests. "What would you do in a nuclear holocaust?" But they couldn't answer. They pan­tomimed ducking under a school desk; the father frowned.

After they had quarantined the part of the country most affected by the bomb, I published a report showing that radiation was harmless. My report on the radiationless bomb was widely circulated. I was promoted. My employers wanted their own environments for themselves, that my data to report, unaccordingly, that the sea would get by. There are other adults around, social services, orphanages, hospitals, shelters. The others, they'll stick around, get pissed on the head by acid rain and all that, but I'll be gone, and the kids will just get used to it." But the kids didn't get used to it or forget, because it never occurred to them that they could. No one ever suggested it.

There were mutant children who sensed the impending exodus of all the adults, who planned on leaving their monstrous offspring behind. The mutated kids were impossible to soothe, perpetually hungry and thirsty, shivering and angry. The adults said, "It's only me going. The kids will get by. There are other adults around, social services, orphanages, hospitals, shelters. The others, they'll stick around, get pissed on the head by acid rain and all that, but I'll be gone, and the kids will just get used to it." But the kids didn't get used to it or forget, because it never occurred to them that they could. No one ever suggested it.

There were side effects on the island—red­dened eyes and this compulsion to rip things. People would be talking mildly at the bank and suddenly rip out their own hair, or go outside and rip the moat of shrubbery surrounding the bank with their bared teeth. They would stumble through the parking lots, chewing the shrubs, eyes gyrating.

I might have stayed on the island if there was no one there I recognized. But there they all were: friends, acquaintances, family members. At first I didn't mind—since we were now "strangers," I no longer had to do their dishes, take them to A.A. meetings, make sure they'd swallowed their pills, fight them off, go to counseling with them, worry about them. She strained to understand what they were saying. She strained.

The ocean had always functioned as a kind of clock for the sentient, but gradually it stopped telling our kind of time. It was just as usual. The ocean had always functioned as a kind of clock for the sentient, but gradually it stopped telling our kind of time. It was on to other measures. It tossed up four hundred dead dolphins one day and claimed one hundred thousand baby seals the next.

The place where one could now go to experience the ancient rhythms of nature was the convenience store. Convenience stores were becoming "nature," and nature had become a run-down, thrashing machine. In the convenience store, people howled and chirped at one another. A man was voiding near the chips aisle. He was in the process of digging a hole with a jackhammer to bury his shit when a robbery took place. He pulled out his video camera and caught the event on tape. He couldn't wait to get home and show his family the video of the robbery in progress, which had interrupted the burial of his bowel movement.

I fabricated phenomena, makeovers for a bevy of new industry-spawned carcinogens—the air is getting cleaner by the day; cloud miasmas: the future is bright; 500 trillion nanobots, built an atom at a time,
"Germinal," by Matthew Ritchie, whose work was on display last fall at Andrea Rosen Gallery, in New York City.

war in a suitcase; carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel combustion have proven highly beneficial to life on Earth, especially cockroaches and poison ivy.

On the outskirts of the city, I saw a man lying on the floor of a dirty small room. There was nothing else in the room but a projecting movie and a chair. The movie showed him sleeping on the dirty floor. He sat in the chair and dissolved. His daughter came home and found the bones of her father in the chair. She sat on his lap bones, and she turned to bone dust. Her son came in and lay on the floor. There was nothing else left but the movie of his grandfather sleeping on the dirty floor, the chair, and the combined bones. He sat on his mother’s lap bones and dissolved. His daughter came in and lay on the floor. There was nothing else left but the movie of her great-grandfather, the chair, and the bones. She sat on her father’s lap bones, and she turned to dust. I averted my eyes.

In the past, when something fell out of the sky, or there were collisions, men in jumpsuits arrived, sirens blaring, to erase all traces. Something was always done about something. Now nothing was done, except documentation. For every event, there were multiple documents and artifacts, until there were more documents and artifacts than events. Inevitably, someone called a document an event, and people made documents of documents. Some chose to end their genetic line rather than risk bringing another fanatic into the world. "He could be the next Hitler," some argued. "Or the next Einstein." This binary, the Hitler-Einstein dilemma, provided an inescapable deadlock for would-be breeders.

After a long hiatus, I delivered a 178-page summary of my "findings" that stated in its conclusion: Continuing growth in greenhouse gas emissions is leading to a higher standard of living that will result in a global utopia by the end of the century. The president quoted liberally from my report, hailing it as an objective docket.

I slept for a week. I awoke numb and looked out at the state. Things moved, had dimension, made sounds, slid right up to the surface, but could not poke through. Nothing was felt any longer, or known through the sense portals, despite the fact that every part of the body was designed for contact. Either the world, usually so flagrant, was camouflaged, or my surfaces were deteriorating. In any case, it was hidden. Time would pass without my seeing or recording events. Some events I would have to imagine. The made-up events were sometimes more believable than actual events. The actual events were often difficult to believe.