

# Materials and Methods in Squid Dissolution

*with apologies to "Buoyancy Mechanisms Limit Preservation of Coleoid Cephalopod Soft Tissues in Mesozoic Lagerstätten" (Clements et al.)*

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Oh Thomas, oh Caitlin—  
I have again slept below the squid body  
strung up in our backyard hickory. All night,  
its sick squid blood made a soup of the dandelions.  
Drip. Drip. Yes, I have run my fingers along  
the melting ice of the squid's back, souvenirs  
from the local fish market. Our abstracts forgetting  
their conclusions. Our graphs of squid  
disappearance crumpled in my sleeping hands,  
a descent so deep it gave up light.

We all want the secret of self-erasure you said to me  
last night, over bean burritos and the froggy sound  
of rain. But not like this. The squid a ghost out  
the second-story window, revolving with disco-ball  
flair. Oh Kenneth, oh Jakob,  
do you remember when we hauled that squid  
into your Dodge Caravan and measured its  
ammonia levels for the first time?  
It was so full of ammonia that we wept.  
Day One, you wrote in your dead squid notebooks.

On Day One, everything was shaped like squid—  
the clouds, the roundabout, the way your voices  
curled around a hypothesis. By Day 14,  
we could barely even remember what a squid  
looked like. A squid? We said, pointing at half-  
mast flags, dropped surprise banners,  
Cheetos dredged from the bottom of the bag.  
No. No. Something else. To be a squid is to disappear,  
body sunk with chemicals that allow both buoyancy  
and immediate post-mortem evaporation.

Ever the scientists, we all gave it a shot.  
Thomas colored his stomach the blue  
of the open sea, hoping for a body  
that left no silhouette to the scattered fish.  
Jakob smudged over the fossil record of his  
footprints on the welcome mat.  
Caitlin and I stood at the sink as she recounted  
her endless sleep-fights with sperm whales,  
waking up to a dark identical to the plum  
of their stomachs. The quiet was nice, she said.  
I thought my secrets would be safe  
until the whale was hauled up and cut open.

As the squid rotated, bled,  
folded in on its simple skeleton,  
we wrote groundbreaking papers  
and deleted them sentence by sentence,  
compelled to be untraceable.

Friends, I have also tried to be nothing,  
but all you said was wake up, wake up.

And when I woke, we sat in the silver dawn  
and watched the squid take the shape  
of an anthill or an evolutionary history,  
we watched it fill with gaps. • • •

