

Lucy Ives

Paradise

The first sentence is a sentence about writing. The second sentence tells you that it's alright to lose interest. You might be one of those people who sits back in his or her chair without interest, and this would have been the third sentence you would have read. The fourth sentence, what does that say, that says something about how I genuinely feel, even if it no longer matters how I genuinely feel, that has not even become the topic of another book. The fifth sentence says that was left by the wayside because it was such a variable thing. That's what the sixth sentence said, and says, that it sits there still, varying, changing its colors, etc., the army of ancient Rome marches by, they think it is some sort of tomb and show it their eagle insignia. The seventh sentence ill conceals its surprise that I should have tried to make it all look so far away. The eighth sentence is therefore a meditation on something close at hand. The ninth sentence is a means of approach. In the tenth sentence I discover I am staring at a list of things I have done written in blue pencil on brown paper. In the eleventh sentence I draw a one-eyed duck on the paper beside the list. In the twelfth sentence I circle one of the numbers on the list and I start to feel nervous. In the thirteenth sentence I realize I have chosen something. In the fourteenth sentence I decide I will read my choice aloud. In the fifteenth sentence I stall by saying the words "I don't have a choice." In the sixteenth sentence I stall again by thinking about the obelisk on the Upper East Side in Central Park and how it is called "Cleopatra's Needle," and how around the base of the 'needle' there are metal supports in the shape of crustaceans, I think they are crabs in fact, but sometimes that word has a slightly obscene intent so I consider not writing it. In the seventeenth sentence I think some more about the kinds of joke that employ that word and whether it is worth thinking about such jokes, as it does alter the genre of what you are writing if such things are allowed to be thought as a part of it. The lawns of the park were very green in early summer, and it is early summer right now, right as I think this, and this is the first time I have lived in New York City for a full year in ten years, this is what I think as the nineteenth sentence. In the twentieth sentence I recall the list and resolve again to take a look at it. In the twenty-first sentence I misspell twenty-first with two 'i's which I think for a second is possibly cute. In the twenty-second sentence I look down at the list, I have circled no. 1875935 on the list. In the twentisecond sentence I misspell twenty-second using an 'i' again. In the twenty-third sentence I read what is written next to no. 1875935, it says, "He was sitting on a bench..." but at this moment a breeze sails in through the open window, lifting the page and you start reading another line, the words, "And you hand in the application and it takes three months and..." In the twenty-fourth sentence you can see me set the page down as someone walks through the door. I turn off the typewriter and scroll out the page and put it facedown on the desk and I cover it with a notebook you weren't aware was also there on the desk. Now you can see it, it is almost the exact same color as the surface of the desk and now you can see it. These were the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sentences, respectively, it is the lot of the twenty-seventh sentence to have to announce that. In the twenty-eighth sentence a cloud passes over the apartment on its way into space. In the twenty-ninth sentence, I think, next year this will be the number of my age. The thirtieth sentence

is all about the speed at which time is passing. In the thirty-first sentence I won't care anymore, I'll see that reality only accrues to itself and does not have to mean something. In the thirty-second sentence I want you to agree with me. Things happen by chance, and what Montaigne pleads with us to believe, in one of his essays, is that fortune makes herself known in the act of reading, there is much that I could not have intended which is yet here, I forget exactly how this goes, this being the thirty-third sentence. I sit down beside myself in the thirty-fourth sentence and say to myself, smiling, even small numbers are big. This is the working of time, the thirty-fifth sentence joins in saying this, too, once one has crossed the years their number does not matter. But what I was trying to get across was, I think in sentence thirty-six, that maybe you could not have done things earlier, maybe it just was not possible in those days for whichever reasons. You spend the thirty-seventh sentence attempting to spell those reasons out. You fall asleep, and in the thirty-eighth sentence you dream about a classroom. It is a classroom in which you are alone, says sentence number thirty-nine, the windows have been left open and a sentence can be read on the blackboard. In the fortieth sentence you have to force yourself to go on. Descartes' dream, you remember, in sentence forty-one, provided a quote supposedly from Ausonius. This is the forty-second sentence, *Est et non*. Then I think it is safe to say that something begins to happen, sentence forty-three tells us, you know what this should be used for. Sentence forty-four says that you forgive yourself. Sentence forty-five says that you remember this number as having been particularly beautiful when worn by your mother. Sentence forty-six says the people go away. Sentence forty-seven is a sentence about what loneliness names itself in the paradoxical presence of others. Sentence forty-eight says it has a name. Sentence forty-nine says that I cannot remember this name. Sentence fifty says that I go back and try and live there in that moment when I was saying the name. I said, "Happiness," and then I said, "Unhappiness." This was sentence fifty-one. That was sentence fifty-two. Sentence fifty-four is a sentence about how there is too much of so many things, there is too much of all the words, but the world runs on underneath them and I keep on imagining how you could have heard me, how you could not have heard me. Sentence fifty-five is a sentence about picking up the phone. Sentence fifty-six is a sentence about picking up the very small cellular phone but not using it and willing the phone to ring on its own. The gray cotton of the sweatshirt I wear is a warm cotton in sentence fifty-seven. In sentence fifty-eight I decide to keep on saying the numbers. In sentence fifty-nine I hold the page up to the light and see the type on the other side show through. In sentence sixty you start to believe me. In sentence sixty-one I start to go back to the beginning. I wonder if I should be worrying. The world is full of pauses, the world is full with continuations, says sentence sixty-three. I let sentence sixty-four go. In sentence sixty-five it occurs to me that I concern myself here with something that ought not to be touched. Sentence sixty-six is a guess that this is the mystery of counting, that is goes on and means itself without having a meaning. I count the people in the distance I can see from my window in sentence sixty-seven. In sentence sixty-eight the breeze has a sweet smell. In sentence sixty-nine, it turns the last week of May in the year 2008. Sentence seventy concerns the lack of what I wanted, in my own mind, to be saying. In sentence seventy-one I'm going so far as to ask you if you can see this, how much of what I thought lay before me remained in the distance. In sentence seventy-two there is a great hill there. In sentence seventy-three we come to be able to see white flowers open their faces and then thousands of white snakes slide down the face of the hill. In sentence seventy-four there is still nothing where we are. In sentence seventy-five the moon changes place with the sun. In sentence seventy-six this takes place again, only now it is day. In sentence seventy-seven it is still day. In

sentence seventy-eight it is still day. Why do you think about tragedy, sentence seventy-nine wants to know, since it is the least likely thing to happen. Sentence eighty will eventually come to me and want to know what I am doing with myself. Sentence eighty-one reminds me to expect this question. In sentence eighty-two something changes. I stay up two nights running and in the morning the sidewalk seems to rise up and meet my feet underneath my feet. Sentence eighty-four contains the question, didn't you already know that this would start to happen. Sentence eighty-five agrees. When I start to read sentence eighty-six I discover it contains the words, It is also true that what you said could *be*. For this reason, sentence eighty-seven is a sentence about why there are certainly points of correspondence between what we expect to be the case and what is. Sentence eighty-eight proclaims it feels the excitement and not the work. Sentence eighty-nine takes action without saying anything first. In sentence ninety I cover my eyes. In sentence ninety-one I uncover my eyes so that I can look again. In sentence ninety-two I cover them again. Now I am speaking to you. Now I am speaking to you. Say the words after me just as I say them. What it means to live is the subject of sentence ninety-six. You are moving out of earshot now. We are not going to miss each other. You have an excellent memory. Please never forget I was the one who told you that

The Compliment

See, the theory this lady has—she’s kind of like you, I don’t want you to be offended—is that people are not separate, in a general sense. Which means, according to her, there are no, I guess, individual people, just, “ways.” Manners and incidences. Remember what you told me? How you said, “That girl is only interesting because she is friends with you”? I used to think about that because I was unhappy, like tell myself it was me, like you said