



*(Single plucked guitar strings, carefully paced and resonant, create tonal slides.)*

*(Following a series of these slow musical slides, an atmospheric outdoors recording fades in. This was made one early morning on the River Kelvin Walkway near to the Glasgow Botanic Gardens in August 2020. The recording includes the last calls of the dawn chorus; the river's movement sounds in the distance.)*

*(A mature feminine voice begins to speak; her accent is vague, but it seems to be trans-Atlantic. The recording is clear and she is speaking from someplace else – this is a voice-over.)*

A person stands on the Glasgow Botanic Gardens bridge. Not the high one, the bridge supporting Queen Margaret Drive across the River Kelvin, but the low bridge, the one recently painted cream and royal blue. It joins the Botanic Gardens and the River Kelvin walkway. Somedays, these days, it's busy here. So many are exercising, running alongside the river, walking, and filling their time. Right now most of these people are sleeping.

It is early morning in late summer 2020. The dawn sun is streaming through the trees. It casts a pale orange light on the person.

Listen.

*(The atmospheric recording of the River Kelvin at early morning, which has been playing under the voice-over, becomes more prominent. 15 seconds into the recording we begin to hear distance rumblings, most likely cars. A wood pigeon begins to coo nearby the microphone, whilst other birds call in the distance.)*

Amidst birdsong, there are distant motors now and then. A sign that change is coming.

The person on the bridge, however, does not notice this.

*(The background sound of the river fades into silence.)*

They stand slightly hunched and leaning against the bridge's railings. Their attention is directed downwards towards the river. We soon notice their chest begin to heave quietly. Animal sobs are growing and wet tears fall from their eyes and cascade down their face.

What sorrow could this be? What pain might they be feeling? Loss, regret, fear, exhaustion, joy, or relief. We do not know. There is no-one present to console them. No caring hand, no warm hug. They are alone. The river is quiet and slow beneath. It is full of summer rain. It carries mountain fragments and hides urban residue. This river, the Kelvin, accepts everything.

Looking closely, we can see one tear, this person's last tear, emerge as their chest begins to quiet and breath settles. Whatever emotion was felt has now passed into liquid and this final tear drops into the River Kelvin.

*(The sound of a waterdrop, perhaps a teardrop, hitting liquid. The atmospheric sound of the River at morning begins to return.)*

The water is cool, its colour is glossy, deep chocolate. Our last tear, this person's last tear, has been swallowed by the fresh moving water.

*(An underwater recording of the River Kelvin fades in. It is muffled and textured by liquidy movement and insects clicking. This sound continues underneath the proceeding voice-over)*

We join it, falling downwards and down, settling finally on the Kelvin's soft, muddy bed, touching ground.

*(A thud of soft impact; the hydrophone hitting the bottom of the River Kelvin)*

From the bottom looking up towards the sky the view is delightful, with sunlight streaming through murky water at right and left angles. The river's slow movement is perpetual, continuous, soothing. A shadow passes overhead. Fish grunt, aquatic insects chirp and call. Muffled, undulating, pulsating, watery sounds envelop us and we listen.

*(The voice pauses and we concentrate on the underwater recording of the River Kelvin; we imagine we hear voices of the river's inhabitants, also a document of the hydrophone's sensitive listening. Crunchy, chirping, squelching sounds circle us)*

Suddenly, a great swish of current dislodges us from this earthy bed,

*(Another soft thud and liquidy movement)*

pulling us up and up to the river's immense face, its surface.

*(...the hydrophone begins to emerge from the river; the feeling of ears popping or coming up for air)*

There we float, feeling both air and river.

*(...now the sound of the mid-day River; birds calling.)*

The sun is now in full force, radiating directly above us. It feels hot.

Our temperature rises and, energised by sunlight, we evaporate.

*(A trio of soprano, soft voices layer and intertwine a melodic, transformative phrase: Do do Doo do Do Do doooooOO.)*

Rising as vapour, the pull is intense. We cannot resist. We feel weightless, light. Ahead, above, a cumulus cloud is forming in the sky.

*(A swirling wind; a cloud moving in the sky.)*

Can you feel this? This is convection. Your material has evolved. No longer tear, no longer river. You are rising gas, a cluster of moisture, emotion in its most delicate, translucent form.

*(A plucked guitar string, slightly atonal; we follow its rise and fall.)*

We join the cumulus cloud, our vapour turning solid as the high air cools us.

*(Mouth-made poppings, layered and clustered; lips pressed together then quickly parted.)*

This cloud is a shapeshifting mass formed of water vapour chilled and made buoyant in this sky.

*(Swirling wind returns.)*

Sunlight bounces among its many condensed water droplets. Bright white light is everywhere.

*(A long moist breath exhaling slowly.)*

The moisture moving within this cumulus cloud rubs along your service. We imagine a finger moving against a string of an instrument. Sometimes soft, sometimes adamant. Pressing.

*(Plucked strings intertwine with voice. They ascend and descend as tonal slides, deliberate and paced.)*

The feeling vibrates, warms your centre, as the cool air refreshes and circles you. Heat and cold mix within this cloud, building power and energy. Updraughts warm, downdraughts cool.

*(Tonal slides fade.)*

In the upper reaches of our cloud, it is now brilliant white. We stay suspended among the cloud's base, which is spreading as new water, dust, salt, and smoke particles merge.

*(Swirling winds, stronger than before.)*

Our base darkens as droplets multiply. And so, our cumulus cloud is growing in the late summer sunshine over this island city.

*(Atmospheric sound of the River Kelvin walkway, recorded in early afternoon in August 2020.)*

Do clouds move faster over Glasgow? On land, I think about the cumulus cloud as being a signifier of warmth, a marker of something, someplace where heat acts upon moisture. Could we spend a day finding, tracing their origins, seeking warmth and water beneath this blue, dappled sky.

*(Layered voice(s) of speaker!)*

'Up here, questions emerge and horizons, fixed perspectives, dissipate. Upside down, right-side up, forward, backward. Who was it who defined scale, quantity, value, belief, meaning...'

*(Now single voice.)*

We let them go.

Still, gravity is real. Also, temperature and wind up here. We accept their cycles, know how to rise and fall and rise again.

On land, I remember a body's warm breath, its beating art and rising chest, air flowing in and out.

*(A warm body breathing slowly; it continues.)*

Cumulus humilis, cumulus mediocris, cumulus congestus. We are expanding upwards and outwards.

*(A final soft breath inhaled and exhaled; the exhale transforms into the sound of swirling winds...the swirling winds then morph into atmospheric sound of the River Kelvin walkway in mid-afternoon. It continues whilst the voice returns.)*

Down below, the earth curves and the River Kelvin snakes along its surface joining the Clyde, then the Firth of Clyde, and then finally the Atlantic Ocean. Up above, we have now become cumulus congestus, a swollen, darkening cloud flirting with precipitation.

Draughts of warm, moist air provide inflow, energy, moisture, and warmth, as cooler air plunges down, transforming it.

As our cloud has grown, we've also merged with other molecules, other droplets jostling for space.

*(Forceful swirling wind becoming stronger.)*

Now, too heavy for the upwards draughts which have been keeping us in flight, we begin to drop.

*(Winds continue and are joined by heavy, warm summer rain recorded in August 2020.)*

Falling, the air rattles your substance, pushes against your surface and the pressure is immense. We give in. We accept gravity and fall.

*(Winds fade and steady rain continues.)*

During this descent, other droplets knock against us. We merge with them, enlarge with them, and we accept them.

And fall.

Back to the river, back to the Kelvin.

A teardrop has returned. A messenger between the heavens and earth. Born of sorrow or joy, water traversing a horizon, riding cycles of growth and release.

*(Birds chirp, here and there, amidst the rain.)*

Above, the sky is darkening. Our cumulus congestus is growing into a cumulonimbus, a storm cloud. Thunder sounds across the horizon.

*(Rain surges; then thunder sounds, deep, clear and strong. It rumbles, resonates, then fades.)*

*(Steady rain; water drops on and near to microphone, then ends.)*