

Changeling

Scene 1

Protected in calm waters, diminutive cousins flourish in the Precambrian waves crashing at their door. They leave no trace, but we intuit their presence long after they have gone.

Scene II

Hotels, floors stacked high. They lean and grow in warm, nutrient-rich water—an accretion of families associated only by fission. I see their old houses cracked and crumbling—rock hard after millennia in the sun. I hike where an ocean rocked babies to sleep each night.

Scene III

A shallow sea of life—azure blue on top and pearl white below—happy beds of oysters, clams, and trilobites. A torpedo-shaped shadow moves silently across the white sand. It is black and sturdy, this hunter, and swimming near the lagoon. I scrape the shell houses of beings from the rock face near my home and watch as they fall onto the tops of my pink Reeboks.

Scene IV

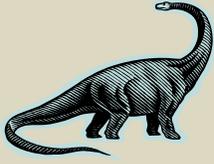
It rises with a massive explosion, climbing jagged and dark into the sunlight, draining a salty afterbirth back into the sea. On the lips of its ragged slopes, an army of slithering forms stretches and drags itself onto the surface, gasping and helpless. It must have been a shocking experience when the Rockies rose into the vaulted sky.

Scene V

A river cuts through it, flooding dark alluvial plains on its way to a distant sea. Tall forms grow out over the land, filtering light through green fingers. Falling, heavy brown cones drum on the land like bongos, heralding a new rhythm.

Scene VI

Soaring above the dense forests, its skin stretched taut on boney scaffold. It glides low over glistening cycads basking in the humid, sunny air. Thick-skinned pods crush verdant land under mountains of flesh.



Scene VII

A sea of grass waves in warm, dry wind. A camel droops its head
to tear its golden meal. Thunderous hooves
sweep across the plains, drumsticks
on the head of land. A shaggy creature
dwarfs the men who stalk it. The bones of Sonorasaurus
bulge from the ledge above.

Scene VIII

A violent interruption, Earth exposed in red
molten rivulets that scorch little life forms
into ash. She moves crazed—land up land down
land all around, sliding past its own form. The inexorable sculptor
works, smoothing, shaping, dropping
little pieces here and there. I walk
around the gently sloping shoulders
of the old caldera.

Scene IX

They come marching up from tropical kingdoms,
those columnar giants with their prickly personalities, and
the lion and the peccary... even a tapir!
They are fair-weather friends arriving on the interglacial.

Scene X

I've come now, with all my people, my children...
come on an interglacial, too, in the Anthropocene Epoch.
I've arrived with an ark of green beings and colorful characters.
It's warm and dry. I wonder
what my time will leave behind.

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Scene XI

Amidst the melting glaciers and warming waters,
new life forms, adapted to the changes and
feeling quite entitled to the Earth.