

Zeb

(Spoken Word)

Zeb watches as the tourists come admire him. He hears them all complaining that the air is thin. Zeb greets every mountaineer who summits him with scenery, his way of saying “Thank you all. Please come again!” Zeb watches as the camouflage-clad workers become moms and dads and earn respect they’ve never had and drape blue over football pads. Zeb watches as my brother and I round the block to walk to school, even when the weather’s cruel. He watches as I make new friends. He watches us pass toys through the gap in our shared back fence. Zeb sees us on the playground, where we learned how to gossip and how to catch feelings and how to drop hints and never bothered to count dead presidents (in either sense). Zeb watches the yellow kid-cans on wheels as we pour out to conquer the day of the field; he watches us increase in size and view the world through keen-but-not-yet-jaded eyes. Zeb watches humans exiting the bank and mall, their countenances filled with gall as the mighty dollar falls. The mortals’ money middles while Zeb burns, and the forest dwellers are forced to gather their prized possessions and move in with friends and relatives before the waves of flames come crashing in. Zeb watches as my team and I run plays against the backdrop of an amber-tinted sky; he watches as the pigskin flies; he watches as our pipe dream dies. He watches as parts of our hearts become petrified, all the while knowing that within our chests un-crusted flesh still resides. Zeb watches us collect our lives; whether we succeed or fail, he sees us try. He watches us change and grow and learn that change and growth are treks in which no one arrives. Zeb sees our changing, recursive, undulating ways. He bears witness to how we spend our numbered days. With a world-weary yet somehow steady gaze, Zeb watches.