



## UNDERNEATH

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*speculative fiction forward to “Stuck Words & Mute Hands:  
On Losing My Voice & Finding It Again” by Rachel Larrowe*

*with thanks to Rachel Larrowe for borrowed words*

My joints shift and move in their new repair as my outer shell continues to manifest: heavier, lighter, unbearable. I struggle to shape myself in this silten exoskeleton. My legs settle and become solid, exhausting the senselessness of movement. *Slowly, silten, sudden, sheath.*

I am trapped inside this silten sheath. Cool, dark, musky conformed earth. The flesh of me hidden under the weight of this world. I have lost my mouth; I have lost my eyes—the sum of me betrays its parts. *Probing, polished, particulate, parts.*

I do not remember the sounds I make; it has been so long since I had a mouth. I listen to the imaginary echo within my husk, a hollow sound within these hollow walls. *You are not what you are. You are not what you are. You are not what you are.*

As I settle into the space of silence I remember the forms of others, the shapes of their eyes and mouths. I try to shift my silten carapace, but it does not listen—it will not become other. I consider the shape of me within, and the shape of me without becomes immutable. *Cryptic, carapace, crystallized, cadence.*

The silence exhausts me, finally, and I lose my shape. In obscurity, I remember, underneath, I am an artifact of pure feeling, a thin-skinned being too big for this silten facade; the rock begins to crumble. *Blindly, breaking, broken, becoming.*

Slowly, words erode me. *Silten.* Slowly, words chip away at me. *Probing.* Slowly, words crack me. *Cadence.* Slowly, voice seeds sprout. *Becoming.* Slowly, I bloom. *Voice.*