



WE EXCAVATE

A third Sunsetters album by Blind Man's Book

(Lindsay Taylor and Jordan Dooling)

(Album art by Jordan)

v2

LINDSAY'S INTRODUCTION

We Excavate has been in progress for about as long as the second draft of *Summer Sucks*, as I recall. Possibly even before. At the very least, we've known since, like, 2014-15 that we wanted it to be drastically different from *Summer* stylistically. This resulted in a lot more post-rock influence, though that influence has lessened to a certain degree over time.

For the longest time, this album existed in my notes as six songs long, with the odd number tracks being instrumental and the even number tracks being vocal, and at about an hour's length. That is an idea that I still like, even though the album didn't turn out that way. However, with our desire to greatly differentiate this album from the previous one, that meant the tracklist would need to be expanded, instead serving as something of a call-back to *Mythology*. Also, like *Mythology*, Jordan ended up doing most of the work, especially in terms of lyrics.

All in all, *We Excavate* is an album that draws from the albums that came before it while also being drastically different from them, and is one to be proud of.

JORDAN'S INTRODUCTION

The Mythology of Empathy introduced us to the midi fictional rock, with some cool riffs and some surprisingly pretty moments.

Summer Sucks refined the structural elements and shot for the stars in terms of scale.

We Excavate is here to bring us back down to Earth, and then deeper still. The rock has been refined, and now it is willing to be playful. Synth and bass are the stars of the show this time, and everything else serves to allow these elements context to develop.

The concept this time is simple: These songs take us progressively farther and farther into the water, starting in something like a river, entering an ocean, taking us through the zones of the sea down to the hadal zone. And maybe even lower than that. Why is the protagonist on this journey? What is their relationship with the "voice" in their head? Who are the gods here? How come nobody seems to need air? These are questions you should be able to come up with your own answers for.

The songs can all stand individually, like *Mythology*, and they can also tell one single narrative, like *Summer Sucks*. *We Excavate* walks steadily in between.

While this album did not turn out to be as rigidly post-rock as we may have first wanted, the end result works as a transition out of the style of the first two Sunsetters albums. "Transition into what," you may ask. As of December 2020, I do not yet know. (As of April 2025, I guess the answer is "the stuff that comes after.") Hopefully, though, you will find these midi files to suggest a *really* good prog album.

SUBMERGED WITHIN

(composition by Lindsay)

Lindsay: I can't for the life of me remember writing this, but I do remember that it was quick. This served as an ambient-ish electronic-ish intro to the album, setting the tone for what was originally going to be a very post-rock *We Excavate*. It still serves that purpose for this expanded version of the album, so we kept it.

... also worth mentioning is that this was low-key part of an idea I had however many years ago that Archangard and Magreat could also be an electronic duo that I'm pretty sure I brought up to Jordan at some point and then promptly forgot about 'til now.

Jordan: The first ever Sunsetters opener that isn't based in punk rock, and instead it's a moody synth piece. I suspect this won't be the last of its kind. One day I took Lindsay's piece and rewrote it for flow and harmony, but the core is still theirs-- it's something of a medley of motifs that will show up on the album. I think specifically the motifs are from Sunken Blue, We Excavate, and Lowest Point.

Get used to the sound of the synth, as I made sure it was used consistently on this album. (It's MuseScore 3's Synth Strings 2, for the record. Maybe sometimes it's Synth Strings 1, or 3. But usually 2, because 2 hits softer.)

In 2025, while preparing the Sunsetters project for a more involved release on my Website, I went through a good chunk of *We Excavate* refining it into a version 2. Submerged Within received a new draft with more of a focus on the Sunken Blue riff and new harmonies. I wanted this opener to better say its own thing.

OXEN OF THE SEA

(composition and lyrics by Lindsay and Jordan)

Lindsay: This one was intended to be the second track of the six-song *Excavate*, a long ambient prog song, that set the tone for the lyrical songs on the album. I don't remember how I came up with the polyrhythmic intro bass and drums part, but it's been around for at least five years, as has the 3/4 part that follows it. For several years the song was just those two sections before Jordan expanded it by adding all the middle parts. The song became a little bit longer than I had envisioned it being, but it all works and I'm overall happy with it.

This song has the most of my early lyrical contributions in it. I had only drafted lyrics for this one and the title track back then, 'cause Jordan had already done 'Lowest Point'. In fact, edits notwithstanding, pretty much all of the lyrics starting from section ABA are from my original draft. I was inspired by the Great Flood story in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* when writing it, hence the allusions to Enki and the Kingship. Also, the final line is Sumerian, and translates roughly to 'water father sea', which I had done all those years ago and forgot the translation until recently, whoops.

... another idea from the Original *Excavate* that I literally just remembered is that I had wanted some of the songs to have, like, atypical instrumentation. For this song in particular, I had the idea that it just wouldn't have guitar on it at all, most likely as a cheeky reference to the pre-Sunsetters band Bassett Hounds. So, it was just bass, keyboards, drums, and vocals, and this is pretty much the reason why I never wrote guitars for it. In hindsight, I wasn't a good enough writer at the time to really pull that off, but maybe I could bring it back for a future EP or something.

Jordan: I had always particularly liked Lindsay's first draft of fragments for this song, consisting of the A and ABA bass and drums. To this day, I'm kinda surprised that when editing those fragments all I really did was use guitar and synth to provide a tonal texture. CAB was me just plain having fun, though. CAB was *really, really* fun. My v2 revisions this time focused entirely on drums, making them more involved to better sound like something Fin Jensby would have fun playing, without breaking from the established mood of the song.

(The section titles take that Sumerian "A aba ab" and turn it into a Genesis pun. They're basically just sections A, B, and C, but the pun was too good.)

WE EXCAVATE

(composition and lyrics by Jordan, based on a Lindsay melody)

Lindsay: This song originated in Jordan adapting what became the prelude to *Ancestor* into a full-band arrangement. At the time I was somewhat hesitant because that solo guitar thing came from a deeply personal pain back at the start of 2016, the death of a sixteen years pet. Then in early 2018 Jordan sent me the start of a new draft of it, and a few months later I finished it up and added vocals for my lyric draft. Then this year Jordan added the middle section to it and rewrote the lyrics.

The original lyrics of the album were about a person drowning at sea and from there encountering an underwater king at war with another and joining that fight, but my two lyrics told that in an abstract way, building up to the ‘Lowest Point’ that is talked about in the Rapture canon. Of my lyric for this one, only a handful of lines made it in, which makes sense because my draft was kinda sparse. I couldn’t tell you what the new lyrics really mean, but I think they’re good enough that I don’t regret mine not being used.

... also, in the six song *Excavate*, this was track four, coming after the long instrumental ‘Feel, Feed, Fear’, which became ‘the Lonely Seas’.

Jordan: I can summarize the lyrical story to this song as “protagonist sees a holy feeding, then protagonist is swept into a current and floats freely slowly off a cliff.” But I did want the lyrics to be broad enough, and the story to be symbolic enough, that they reward coming up with deeper meanings.

As for the music, well. The intro was a study on Gregorian chant composition I did one day. I honestly do not remember when or why I made it transition into a chugging metal power chord rendition of White Drought. But after that point, the rest of the song always felt like it was going to end up the way it did; it was just a matter of sculpting it out of the marble, and thus taking some years to get better at writing music first. The middle section just kinda happened one day. It’s based around a drum-and-bass groove that was *originally* slated for Lowest Point in an earlier draft. Really freaking smooth groove, too, good on Lindsay for that. Somewhere I started calling it the “Excavate riff” and then I managed to work it into the song itself.

I think this song was originally titled “The Many Names of Weneg.” Instead, now it’s our first title track.

THE LONELY SEAS

(composition by Lindsay, style by Jordan)

Lindsay: You might remember this one as a bonus track from a previous version of *The Mythology of Empathy*. It's been rearranged into a more electronic thing, whereas it was previously a very definitely guitar-based song. As I recall I wrote the whole thing back in 2015, and it was a good three-movement, thirteen minute song. The first movement got used in 'Rise of Her Rain', becoming the third movement of that song, and the rest got edited down into what it is now.

Jordan: As "Hidden in the Trees" was our tribute to LizardBite's Fearblog, "The Lonely Seas" is our tribute to CuteWithoutThe's. (It doesn't exist on the web anymore, so I can't link it.) I didn't expect this song to end up on this album, but stripping it down to a Basset Hounds-esque drum-and-synth-and-bass setup made it an appealing interlude for me. My contributions to this piece include: The somewhat involved drum pattern (v2 added more of that), the additional bass providing midrange harmonies, and the Submerged Within reprise at the end.

While there are no lyrics to this one, consider it a representation of an eventful voyage. The next song's lyrics allude to the protagonist having already passed "underwater forests" and "high extrusive seamounts," and I like to interpret "The Lonely Seas" as depicting the crossing of those.

I think this song is an unexpected delight. Very happy about how it came out, the renewed focus on texture.

ALREADY OUT OF BREATH

(composition and lyrics by Jordan)

Jordan: The “Midnight fills you” chorus, and basically the entire second half of this song, stem from a loose attempt to write music that captured how *Finnegans Wake* chapter 1 made me feel. This wasn’t even originally part of the *Sunsetters* context, but years later I still had no idea what to do with the piece, and I found a place for it in *We Excavate*. Editing this song was like banging my head against a brick wall. At no point in the process did I know what the final song would sound like or how it would be structured; I just knew it had to build into the second half. I would chip away at it, a little bit of work at a time, over a long period *of* time. And then one day I decided to put this song through the Reala test: I sent it to my friend RealaChao, and she loved it. So I figured it was probably done.

Fun fact: The only kind of whale with an esophagus large enough to accidentally swallow a human whole is the sperm whale, also coincidentally the only whale known to dive as far down as the Midnight Zone.

The whale dies in this song. I’m sorry.

Lindsay: This one was all Jordan. One day he sent an in-progress draft of it to me, and kept building on it from there. It’s one of the three songs to not have come from the previous version of the album, along with ‘the Sinking Song’ and ‘Siren of the Abyss’. I particularly like how the first thing you hear in this song is vocals, since the previous song is instrumental. I dunno, it sounds neat. Also fun fact, after this, the Sinking Song, and Siren got added to the album, it made what was originally, like, an hour or so album come incredibly close to being too long for one disc. This wouldn’t have been an issue if we hadn’t consciously decided that this album should be a single disc, in contrast to *Summer*. I dunno, I just kinda find this funny in hindsight.

THE SINKING SONG

(composition and lyrics by Jordan)

Jordan: I don't really recall when or why I made this song (I think I wrote it the last time I was in America?), but I do recall how: I wrote a drum beat, then I tried literally just copy-pasting the drum beat into the bass score (always a fun experiment, since it makes no sense to do so), and I noticed a really groovy set of chords in there so I did maybe a little bit of tweaking to clean it up, and voila, the Sinking Song main riff. The bass ostinato (which shows up, for instance, at the very start) was kind of a Super Metroid-y thing. And then the middle section was an attempt at a musical idea I've always wanted to do: Music for a descent into an abyss. Out of these ideas, a complete song was pretty simple to come up with. I love the mood of this song.

As for the lyrics, well, I like doppelgangers, and I like sirens. For you Fear people in the audience, this siren corresponds to the Mother of Snakes. (Amusingly, there is now a Fear called the Siren, which matches this song's antagonist quite neatly. But that Fear didn't exist when I made this song!)

Version 2 was another drum pass, quickly becoming one of my favorite activities. The *music* of this album was downright good the first time around; I've just become more committed to fleshing out drum patterns over the years.

Lindsay: This song was the first new one to get added to the tracklist, as I recall. There was an idea that it could come after 'Lowest Point' as a way to bring the focus back onto the protagonist and their participating in the fight against the opposing king. It was never, like, an idea that I was particularly fond of; the only reason I even tried it was because the in-progress draft that Jordan first sent me had a vocal line, and I tried to write words that would fit it, and it ended up being about the aforementioned fight against a king. But then we reordered the tracklist, making that not work, so my lyric didn't get used; I think, like, a phrase or two made it in (though I think I deleted my attempt, so I can't confirm if any of it is actually there).

[Jordan: I'm pretty sure "All it takes is one false step / just a glance over your shoulder / And now you join the deep / sinking into your watery grave" was one of Lindsay's lyrics, or at least based on one. I'm *pretty* sure??]

SIREN OF THE ABYSS

(composition by Lindsay)

Lindsay: This was a short ambient guitar thing that I kinda just did one day. I had happened upon a How To video on YouTube for playing ambient guitar somehow, and after watching it I came up with the guitar part. I'm not entirely sure what I was going for with it, but I thought it fit the more ambient aesthetic of this album, so I sent an in-progress draft of it to Jordan and it got included in the expanded tracklist. It was originally, like, three-and-a-half minutes, but it got shortened a bit to make the album's length more manageable.

Jordan: I added harmonies and made some sounds consistent with the rest of the album. It's what I do. Version 2 saw a rewrite of the ending, once again bringing back Submerged Within, weaving that motif throughout the album, and perhaps better transitioning into the less-relaxing Lowest Point.

LOWEST POINT

(composition by Jordan and Lindsay, lyrics by Jordan)

Lindsay: This was intended to be the Big Song of the album, the sixth and final track and culmination of all the lyrical themes n'at. Apart from now being the eighth track, it is still all of those things. It was more overtly 'metal' than the previous songs in the previous version of the album, which fit the previous lyrics better than more ambient material would have. The ambient section towards the end was originally a call back to the ambient movement of 'Feel, Feed, Fear', but now is a call back to 'Rise of Her Rain' instead, which is fitting, since both songs are the Big Songs of their respective albums and share water themes.

The final section is definitely my favourite part of the song. It was originally, like the rest of the song, a metal riff, but that riff ended up in use for another, as yet unannounced thing (this is still true and I would love to do something with it, but real life circumstances make that unlikely for the time being). So now it's a quiet, melancholic ambient thing, courtesy of Jordan, and it's probably the perfect ending to the song.

In this latest version of the song, it is now sub-twenty minutes. The main reason for this is that we rewrote the big solo in movement two, made it a bit shorter. There were probably also cuts elsewhere in the song, but my main focus for the rewrite process was working on the new guitar solo. I do kinda miss the original, but it is probably for the better that we redid it.

Jordan: The lyrical idea of movement 1 is basically "what if the protagonist gets to the bottom of the sea, and it turns out they just find the scene depicted in the old album art?" But with details added, pulling from influences such as Greek myth, Collins-era Genesis, and the Slender Man.

As for actually writing the music for this? Well, it took a long time, how about that. But when I hit upon a rendering of a riff that I thought was killer, that's when that section started to really take shape in my head. Movement 2's main riff stems from material I wrote for a different band called Breadwinner. Lowest Point was basically the reason this album needed to exist, as it is the source of "Dawn, I still wait for my God," a lyric that gets distorted throughout *OH GOD THE RAPTURE IS BURNING*. This also means, through what I can only loosely refer to as "textual genetic history," that this song had

to be cool enough to match the hype of Dream Theater's "In the Presence of Enemies," its memetic pre-copyright ancestor. (These are statements that make sense in certain contexts, I promise.)

In Version 1, movement 2 featured a long guitar solo that was really engaging, but it came from a 2020-era generative AI inputting midi notes based on the core riff, which I then curated and edited every note of. I kept it at the time because it really did sound surprisingly good. But for Version 2, I wanted to try writing an entirely new guitar solo by myself. I wanted to put the work in, y'know? I want every Sunsetters release to be *our* work. So that's what I did. It took two days to write, and then a third day where Lindsay did a draft and then I worked with *that*, and that's what we've got now. I think this solo is fire.

I also went and elaborated on the keyboard solo in movement 1, which was a fine solo but.. well, it needed elaboration! Lowest Point has a pretty engaging concept to it, but musically it is kinda *pure* music, a flowing sequence of grooves and melodies. What was Good before had to become Great. This song has to encourage relistens of its 19-minute bulk. That's a tall order for any composer! And I can't tell you if I succeeded or not, that's something only you can decide.

IN THE SUNKEN BLUE

(composition and lyrics by Jordan)

Lindsay: This one has existed for a while, not sure how long, but the second part was pretty much always final, barring certain edits. It having lyrics was a very late decision, but they work as a succinct epilogue to the narrative of the album.

Jordan: The first half of this song used to be *really* happy; I had written it while in America, I think, visiting Quinn, and I was almost assuredly channeling a general feeling of love. All that remains of this old first half is the melodic progression for the vocals and that bass riff. The second half, on the other hand, I don't remember if I *also* made while in America, but I know I stumbled on a series of notes and a groovy tempo that felt right out of Boards of Canada. The end result is a piece with a strange mood that I think sits somewhere between "sinister" and "mystically content."

Originally, this was supposed to be somewhere in the middle of the album. The history of how we decided the track listing is complicated and not *really* that interesting when articulated, though. What might be a little more interesting, at least clarifying from a conceptual standpoint, is that sometime after I wrote this piece I played *The Witness* and was exposed to an old Islamic passage that felt entirely relevant to what this song was going for. I will leave you with it, in full.

"God bade me behold the sea, and I saw the ships sinking and the planks floating;
then the planks too were submerged.

And God said to me, "Those who voyage are not saved."

And He said to me, "Those who, instead of voyaging, cast themselves into the sea,
take a risk."

And He said to me, "Those who voyage and take no risk shall perish."

And He said to me, "In taking the risk there is a part of salvation."

And the wave came and lifted those beneath it and overran the shore.

And He said to me, "The surface of the sea is a gleam that cannot be reached.

"And the bottom is a darkness impenetrable. And between the two are great fishes,
which are to be feared."

- Niffari, c. 970

Sunsetters are:

Ganymede “Degan” Allen

Guitars

Paul Blackwood

Bass, General Vocals

Elsie Carr

Lead Vocals, Keys

Fin Jensby

Drums

& Remington Larson

Guitars

Blind Man’s Book are:

Jordan Dooling

*Arrangement, Composition, Lyrics,
Production, Design, Visual Art*

Lindsay Taylor

Arrangement, Composition

Cadet

Faceless Man In Tentacles Art

& Knuckles

All Instruments

Special thanks from Lindsay to:

Muscores versions 2 and 3 for being great and also free, the University of Pennsylvania for having a convenient Sumerian dictionary, all the bands/singers I like for doing good work, the Fear Mythos for still existing and creating cool content and being generally cool people. And Audrey, for being our biggest and possibly only fan. And Jordan, for doing all the work, again; love you.

And everyone who listen to the album. We hope you have enjoyed listening, and that you continue to do so.

Special thanks from Jordan to:

MuseScore version 3 is a well-oiled machine, so long as you know how to make it purr. Sony Vegas is thorough and bulky like an old computer, and it also hard crashes my computer if I don’t set the video quality to be low enough. The Fear Mythos has some role in this album too, though it’s getting harder to articulate how. Thanks also to the music of Genesis, Pink Floyd, Yes, Dream Theater, Boards of Canada, Autechre, Angelo Badalamenti, and Metroid; the writings of the Mesopotamians, the Hebrews, the Muslims, the Catholics, the James Joyce, and also the metal lyricists; for being good influences. The Epilogues-friendly Homestuck crowd gave good motivation. And Audrey and Quinn, you are our two biggest fans at the time of writing. Lindsay, I’m sorry for messing with White Drought while you weren’t too cool with that; thank you for your beautiful compositions and for getting what this album was going for, all this time. And yes, everyone who listens. Seriously thank you. You mean everything.

See you next album!

