



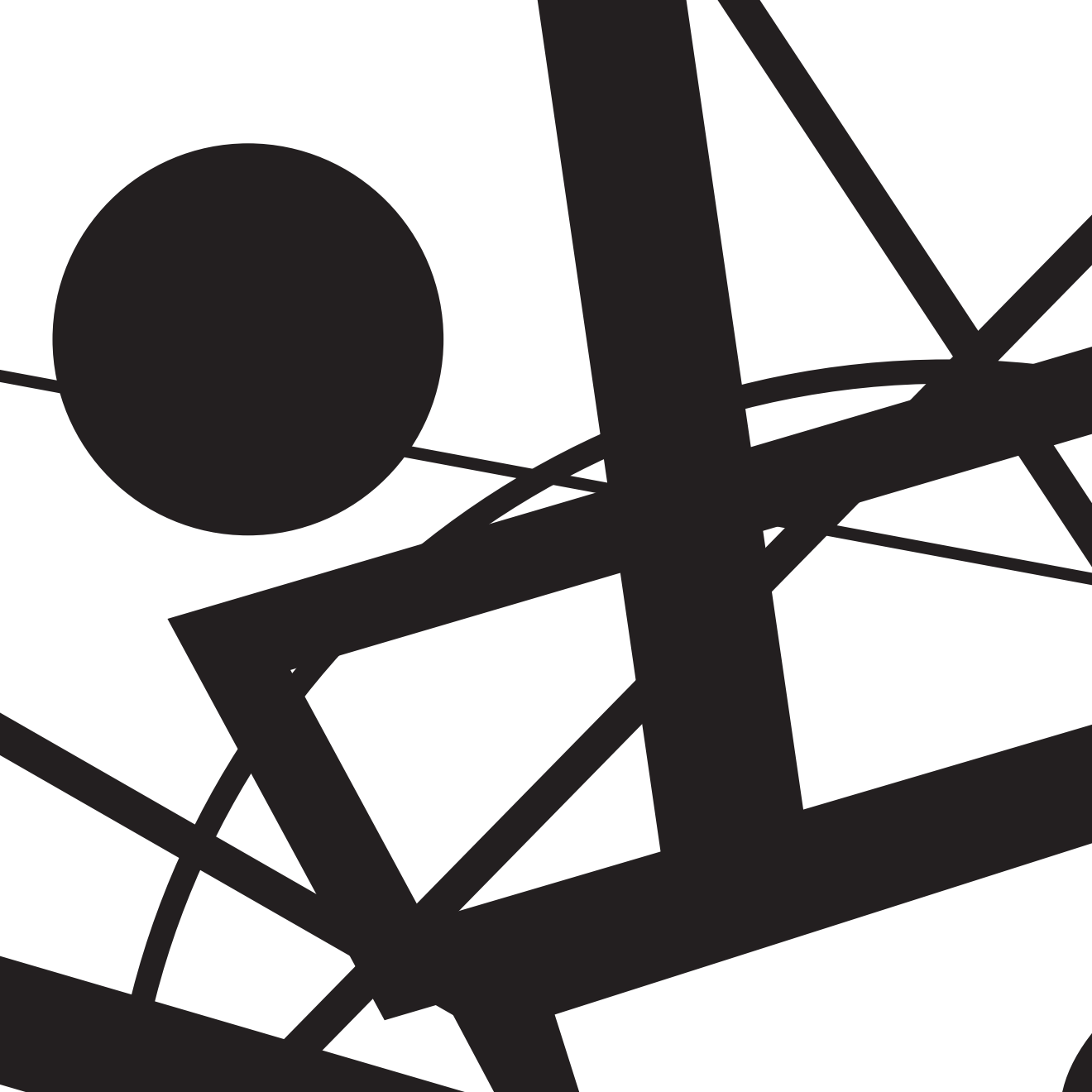
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nicola bullock







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nicola bullock



# Stuck in Free Fall

*surrounded by nothing of which is composed the search for something  
and through an unknowing will never be found, a heaviness sounds,  
and ----- abounds, and sometimes from somewhere  
surrender astounds*

Nicola Bullock

Yoav Admoni, Thinking Partner

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts, Dance

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The University of the Arts



# Table of Contents





This is a book about nothing.

Approached as negative space, as a void void of meaning, nothing corrupts. Insisting on its lack, it forces a reckoning with emptiness; destabilizing solid objects and linear time, it shepards the unknown. Always there and never there, nothing rejects the fixed and familiar as it continuously never changes.

In-between the soil and stars a starting point shifts right, darts left. Nothing is ready, waiting, to animate the darkness; when given absolute attention, elusive nothing finds a voice. Suprisingly intimate, nothing- with no fear and nothing to prove- releases certainty, dismisses meaning, and re-centers imagination and felt sense before dissolving, like smoke rings, back into the darkness.

Nothing- immanent, unknoweable- discloses the doubt, neediness, and pettiest of conflicts with oneself. Its persistent haunting voice whispers ‘Rebel, rebel, rebel, relent’ to the hesitant, reflexive, and forgetful. Held in the tension of resistance with surrender on the mind, an uncertain commitment ensues as nothing exercises existence in the gap. The gap- between here and there, between then and now and then again, between one step and the next- describes the inescapable movement from the known into the unknown that we practice everyday.

Turning nothing into something may ring as a peculiar, deviant, and perhaps pedagogically antithetical approach to understanding its essence. But nothing reassures: it has no essence. This lack of essence is an endless source of becoming something new: of becoming something, living, dying, and doing it all again, but this time differently.



Unfortunately I am afraid, as always, of going on. For to go on means going from here, means finding me, losing me, vanishing and beginning again, a stranger first, then little by little the same as always, in another place, where I shall say I have always been, of which I shall know nothing, being incapable of seeing, moving, thinking, speaking, but of which little by little, in spite of these handicaps, I shall begin to know something, just enough for it to turn out to be the same place as always, the same which seems made for me and does not want me, which I seem to want and do not want, take your choice, which spews me out or swallows me up, I'll never know, which is perhaps merely the inside of my distant skull where once I wandered, now am fixed, lost for tininess, or straining against the walls, with my head, my hands, my feet, my back, and ever murmuring my old stories, my old story, as if it were the first time.

— Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*

I know

I'm trying to move closer to something.

I'm trying to move closer to something that I recognize but do not yet know.

I'm trying to move closer to something that I know: what do I know?

It feels important, mysterious, and wanting to be known.

I feel sad when we are in touch.

It is always present and it loves me.

To listen and sense and look and wait.

I can be a means to express an unknown.

Every thought and feeling matters in this moment.

The teaching happens in and through presence.

Why.

I don't know

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,



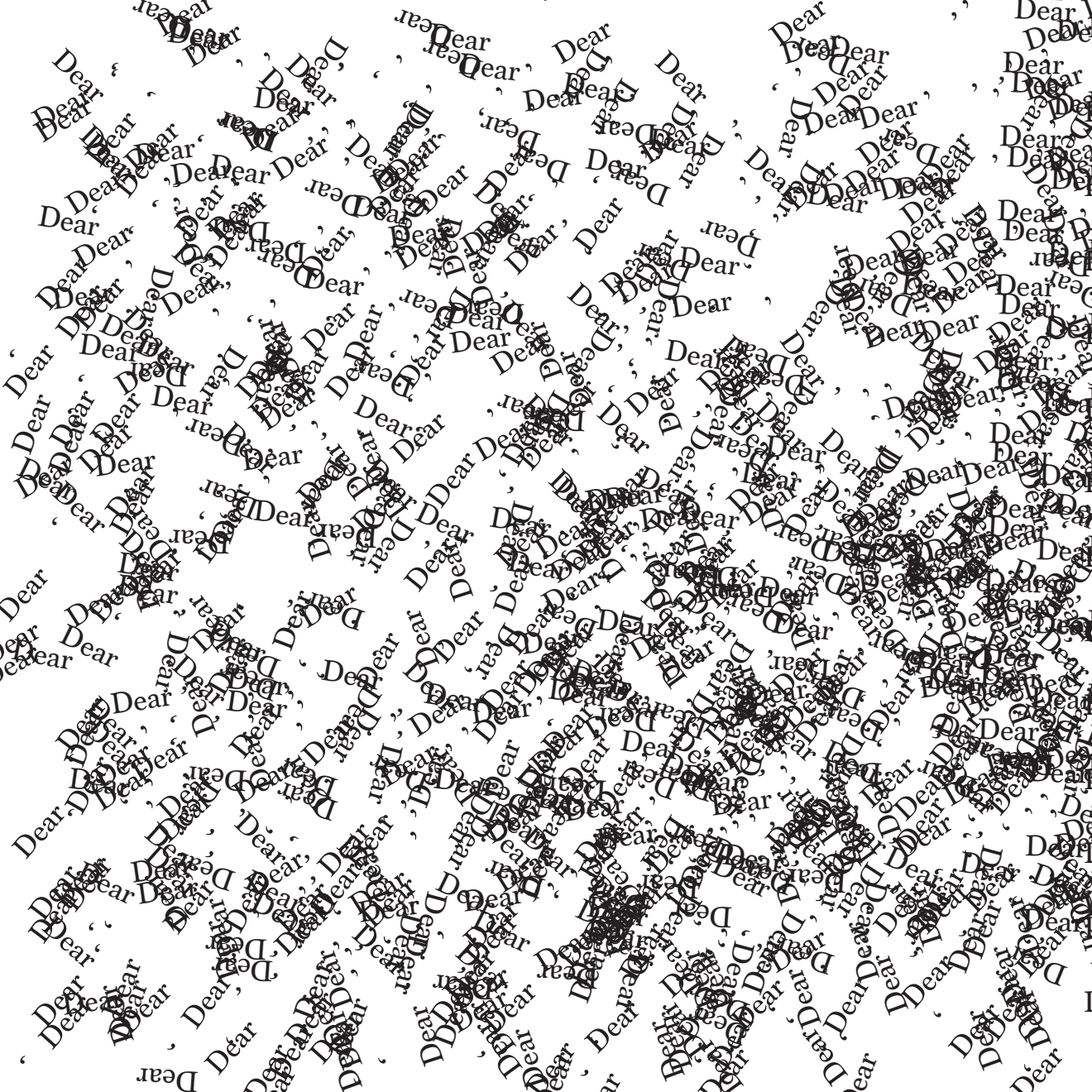


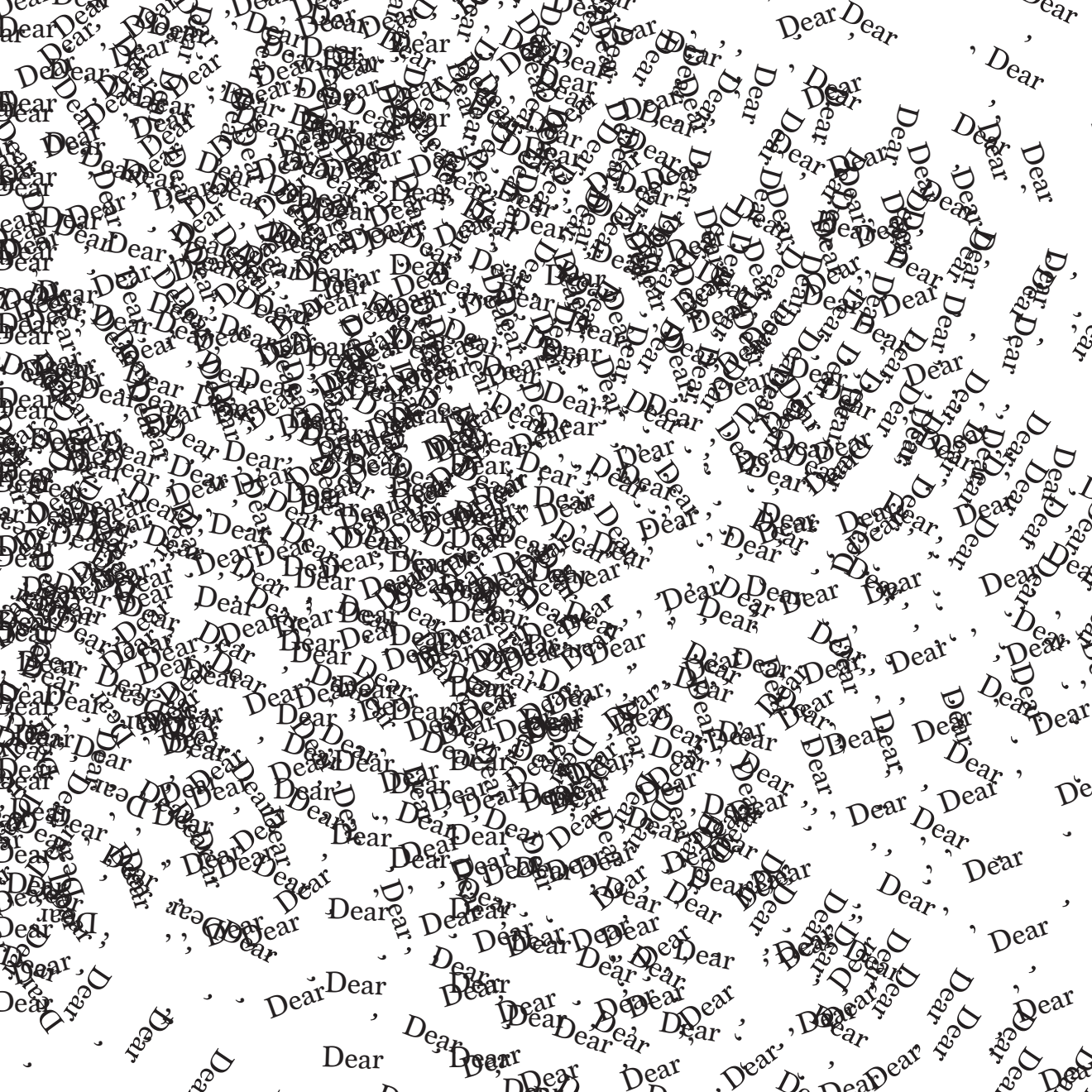
Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,









Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

All of a sudden we are dears to one another and it's simply because I don't know your name or if you have one. You know you ask quite a lot of me- to enter into conversation with a non-being being, like one of the dust bunnies from Totoro except bigger and instead of bouncing suspended you swarm and float about 3 feet off the ground like gnats but instead of gnats you are like fog, hanging around or often approaching me like a 7th grade crush during the last song of the school dance, knowing it's your last chance to ask me to dance. If you are here to dance, maybe later, but right now I want to listen to you through words. Listen to you and invoke you and make you with words. You come into being as I write, unfolding like an origami crane, is that right?

*I am nothing  
I live inside the \_\_\_\_ \_ \_ \_  
I am here  
I ----*

*You want me here, you want to figure me out, you want to put me down in a book so  
you can point to your friends and say-  
Look- you want me, you get us- a dark fuzzy swarming cloud of non-being along with  
your dear friend.*

*You wanted this, and there's no reprimand in that statement. You wanted me to appear  
so here I am, loud and clear. Swarming, floating, bumbling, whatever. I am here.  
Your sadness is misplaced. I make you sad but I am not sadness. I am not loneliness or  
even non-being. These concepts are not the point.*

*Do I want a voice? No. Will I give you meaning? No.*

*I'm not here to give or make or satisfy meaning.*

*I am? I am real? I am nothing more than whatever you make me.*

*I am swirling words swirling around nothing.*

*I really don't care what you think.*

*I am not animal or spirit.*

*I don't breathe. I have no problems and nothing to prove.*

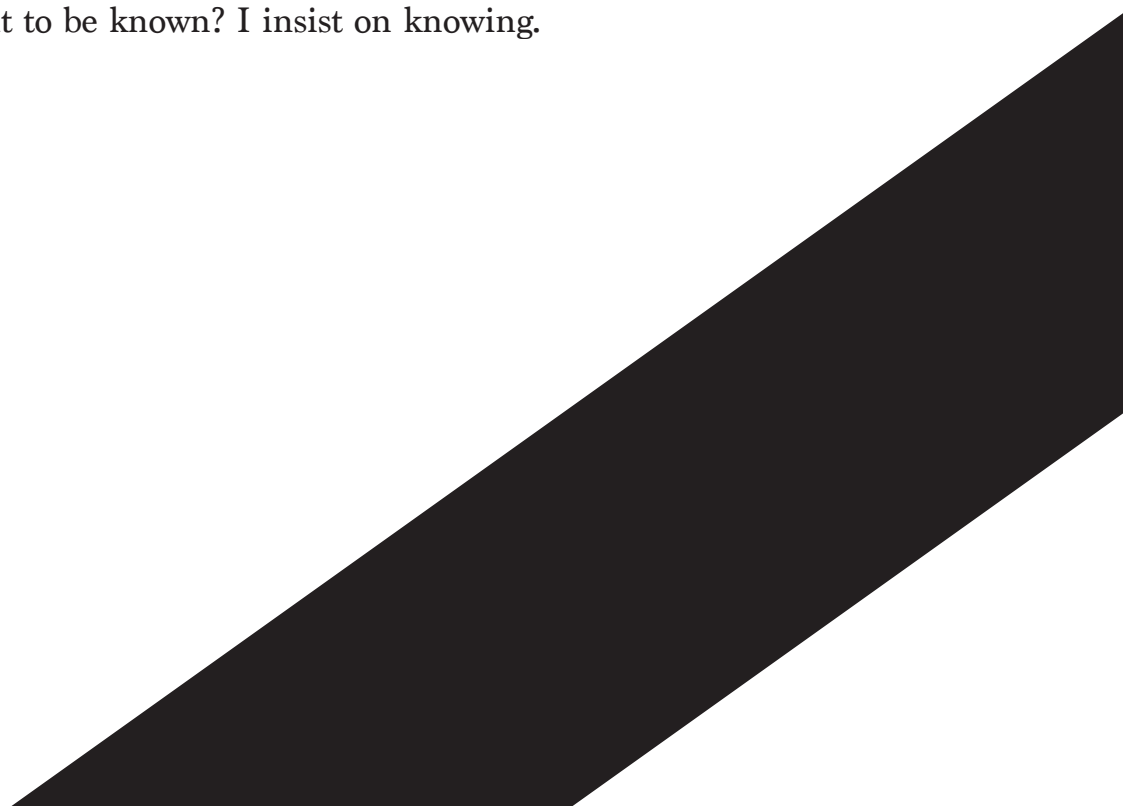
*But I like you, and you seem to be having fun.*


*Do you have any more questions for me?*



Dear            ,

Why are you so matter-of-fact, why do you surprise me with so little concern for the niceties and such candor in your voice? I like to be surprised and would like to know you better. I don't know who or what you are exactly, but I think I would recognize you if I saw you on the street. Why is it that I only know you when I am alone and you seem to visit me when I'm sad, but maybe it's just that sadness quiets my mind and you sense the quiet and in the quiet I sense you. Empty and true except not-empty and not-true. Language is so slippery when talking to you, and why do you want to be known? I insist on knowing.





*I'm tickled by this demand and delighted at your persistence. What about poetry? Do you like poetry? Do you understand it? I am like that: in-between the words and you and when you reach for the meaning you've gone too far.*

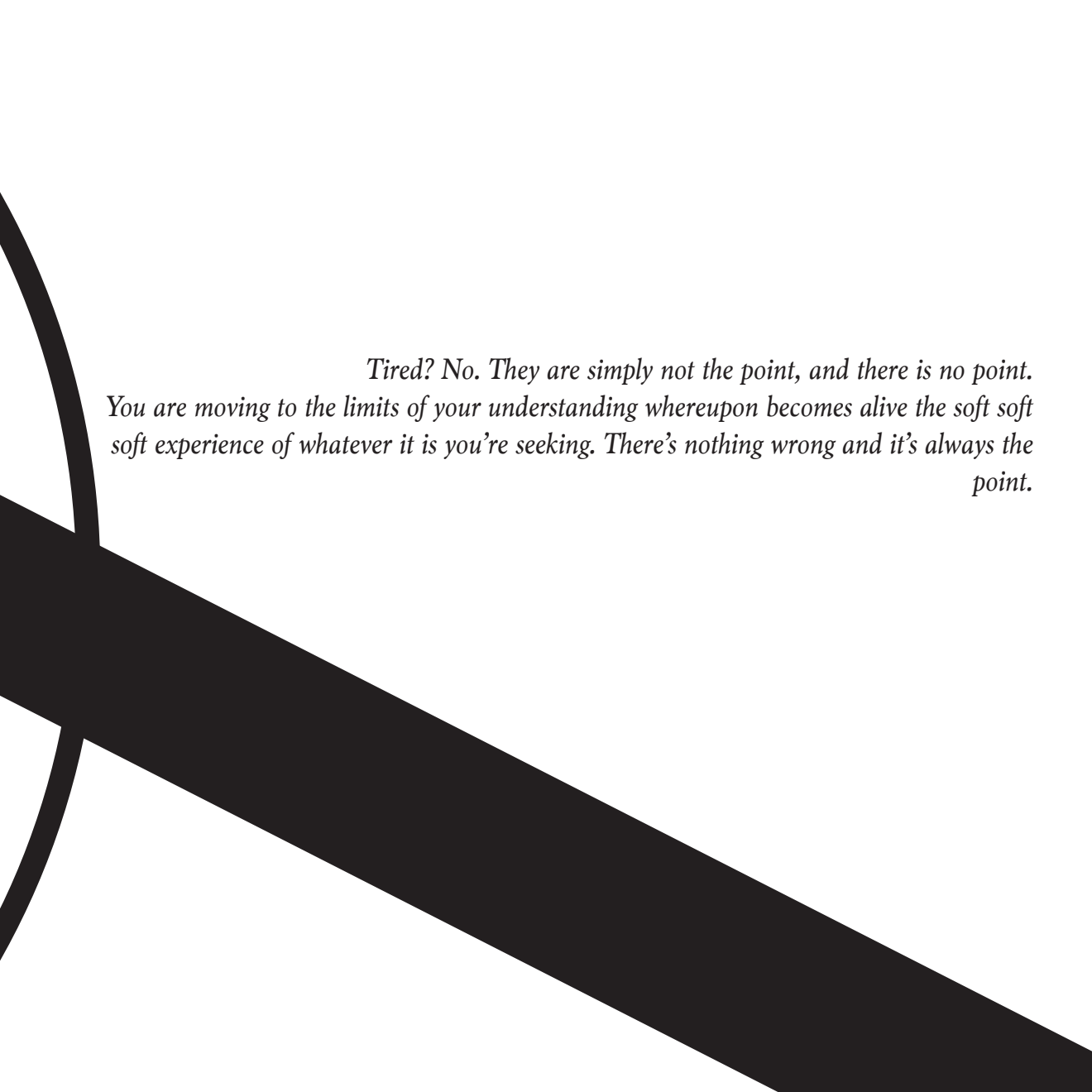
*As I said, no you said, I am simply unfolding. Does an origami swan have anything to prove? Does it want, or not want, something? Or is it shaped by someone's hands and then unshaped by time? And why again is my form so all-important? Am I only real when I appear in form? And if so, where have you spotted me? Why do you want me to be real?*



Dear ,

Well what does it mean if you're not real? I'm beginning to know you better in spite of yourself, to know that "meaning" and "real" are ideas that mean nothing. But I think that you know the limits of my understanding and I think that you like me. I'm happy that you like me or at least like me enough to write back.

Why are you here? Why do you insist on your right to- no, the fact of - why do you insist on the fact of your label-lessness, your non-identity, your meaninglessness? Are you like me, tired of these things?



*Tired? No. They are simply not the point, and there is no point.  
You are moving to the limits of your understanding whereupon becomes alive the soft soft  
soft experience of whatever it is you're seeking. There's nothing wrong and it's always the  
point.*

All of the prepositions, then nothing

Over nothing  
Under nothing  
With nothing  
Behind nothing  
Through nothing  
Beyond nothing  
On nothing  
Next to nothing  
Inside nothing  
Outside nothing

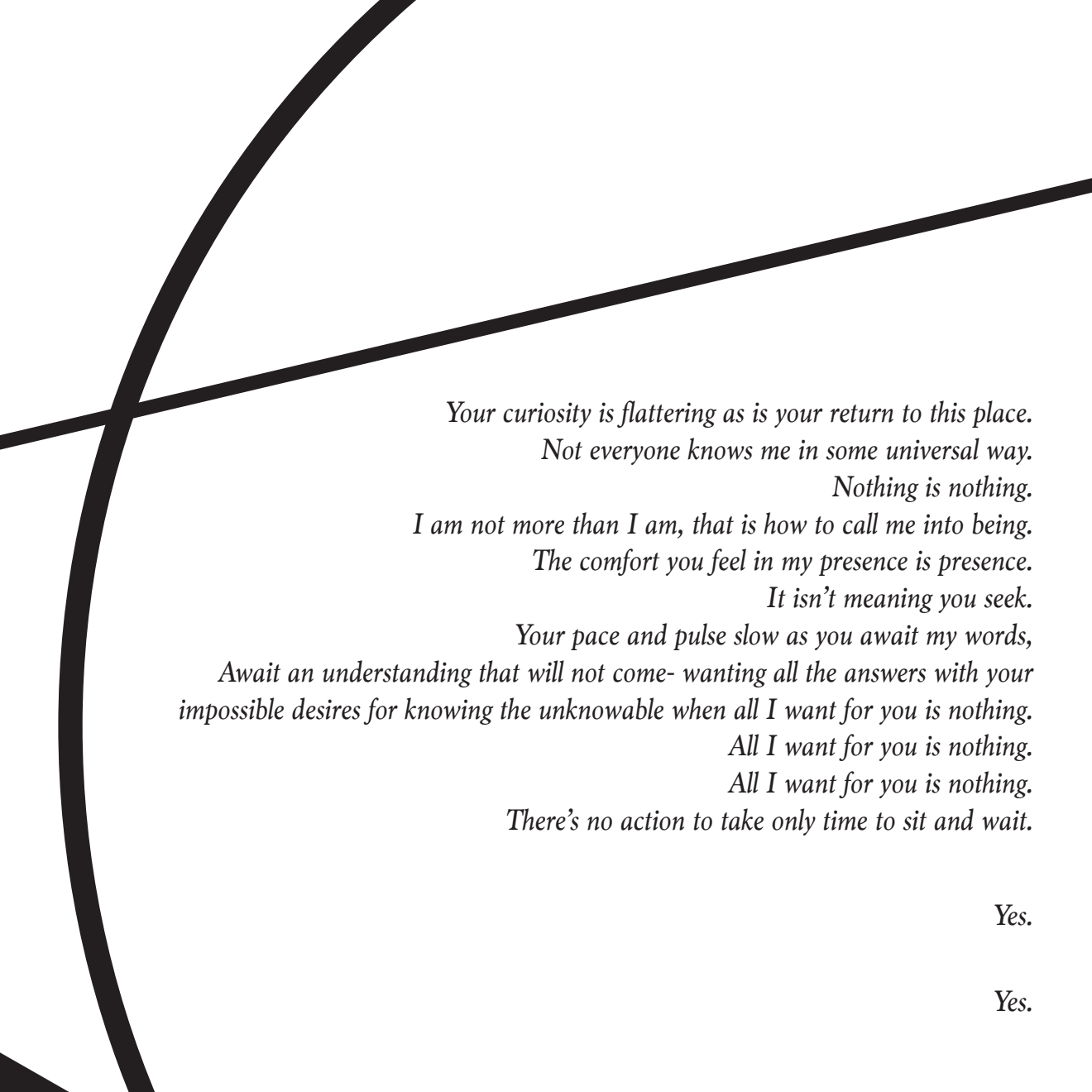
And so on

Are you appearing now more than before? If so, is it because of the state of the world? Is it to balance all the things, all the somethings of today? Is it due to boredom, are you like a Greek God who is very powerful, but not almighty, with some personality and human traits? How can I recognize you? Am I comfortable with my need to recognize and understand you? Why do I demand from you, or is it just nice to be in conversation?

I want to know how to expect the unexpected precisely and am crushed by the weight of you pressing me down.

Am I trying too hard?

Are you all I need to get through this?



*Your curiosity is flattering as is your return to this place.  
Not everyone knows me in some universal way.  
Nothing is nothing.  
I am not more than I am, that is how to call me into being.  
The comfort you feel in my presence is presence.  
It isn't meaning you seek.  
Your pace and pulse slow as you await my words,  
Await an understanding that will not come- wanting all the answers with your  
impossible desires for knowing the unknowable when all I want for you is nothing.  
All I want for you is nothing.  
All I want for you is nothing.  
There's no action to take only time to sit and wait.*

*Yes.*

*Yes.*



I am here. Are you? Your silence sensitizes my ears to sound and strange things happen when you're around. I love you! I love you! I love you! (I say, hoping you will come).

Was it because I said I love you?

I'm here.

No, it is because you love me and thought that saying so would scare me away.  
Your fears are endearing. Your need doesn't scare me.

Nothing is here

A heavy awaits on the side of the stage  
For its turn to enter and signal the page  
You write on to flutter and flitter away  
Stop sit stare and crumble  
In empty to stay

Stop waiting and listen the timing is near  
To hear past the flowers dug out of your ear


Stop making things matter we've known all along  
The wearied and weak are singing our song

With hustle and haste and impossible gain  
You signal the warped path of calling your name

I mean I mean I mean I mean  
You mean so much to mean  
I mean

Can't we all just get away  
Can't we all just get away  
Can't we all just get away





all of life,  
so mystical



Time interrupted in its midst and time is interrupted when  
and sometimes so interrupted that it never starts talking again.

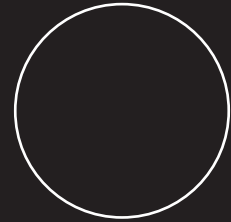
What happens when time remains mute?

the sinking

the sinking

the sinking

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The sinking comes quickly in sleep-deprived state  
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[ ]

Four mornings and we haven't written. Are you here today? Central air coming from two places and \_\_\_\_\_ pulling out the clean dishes, no putting away the dirty and I hear her silence. I wonder if she's wondering about me and I and I and I am not convinced you are here nor am I certain you're not. The more I write the more I feel your quiet waiting. So I will keep writing.

I wonder if you want me to take you to a restaurant, cook you dinner, go on long walks on the beach together. Or if I just want to do those things and haven't ever done them with you.

*I'm here, I'm here.*

*I am deep down, the bottom of the exhale stillness eternally waiting to stay exhaled and wasting so that there becomes far off and away, so close by reality but not quite really. Time suspends like war upends, like murky ends and shirtless hems. Nothing has to be good or right or real, you worry too much. If you want me I am here, for softball games and carnival rides. I like a little adventure.*

I forget sometimes that its you who found me- you found me when I didn't know I was looking for you except I know that that's not true. I did want something and here comes nothing

*Do you remember how I felt when you began?*

You first spoke to me and made yourself known three weeks ago, one day after I opened back up to the emptiness of. In silence and with hazy morning light I lay on the floor and emptied. I was nothing and no one, untethered from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ like I visited an island where nothing exists and I was alone. A split between my body and the world.

*And in that split you found me.*

I never thought of you except in the awareness that I wasn't thinking of you.





What did ■■■■■ do before ■■■■■ began?

Does nothing experience \_\_\_\_?

Does nothing take up -----?

What is a lot of it, a whole lot of nothing?

Does **\_\_\_\_\_** exist without **\_\_\_\_\_**?

Why does ---- about ---- make me ----?

Do calm and present

## Have I lost the connection to you?

Are \_\_\_\_\_ ---- change?

Are \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_, are \_\_\_\_\_ a secret \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_ me, are \_\_\_\_\_ already here always waiting for me \_\_\_\_\_ to you?

Does it feel like haunting, to be always \_\_\_\_\_? I would ask '\_\_\_\_\_' but I won't give myself the \_\_\_\_\_ of ----- I am ----- but tell me- am I?

Do you ever forget \_\_\_\_\_?

What's the \_\_\_\_\_ writing \_\_\_\_\_ and writing \_\_\_\_\_?

Am I **■■■■■** too full of ----- and ----- and giving too much?



Must what is empty become filled?





Will everything that begins quietly,  
if given the opportunity, become  
loud?

Are you still here, and do you really expect me to jump in just like that,  
your eager mistress, ready waiting and willing? Yes, yes, *a thousand times, yes.*

*You are fast today and your ears are sharp. I've been here all along growing nothing  
everyday as you grow older, old, and die.*

*The moments pass you age some more  
no going back to days of yore  
when death is always at your door  
and nothing's nothing anymore*

Your tone has edge and need to share, your rhyme and riddle attract my  
stare- oh now I'm sounding just like you- to break the spell I won't, I do-  
I can't I like this oh-so-much, a melding with specific touch-

*Your meaning must break for me to find voice in your head and take  
your fragile/your fragile so soft in my hands  
to see and mourn  
but not understand  
To see and mourn but not understand  
I take you so soft and warm in my hands  
To see and mourn and not understand  
Holding your life so soft in my hands....*

nothing can rip me open any more

nothing can rip me open any more  
nothing can rip me open any more

nothing can rip me open any more

nothing can rip me open any more

nothing can't rip me open anymore  
nothing can rip me open any more  
nothing can rip me open any more

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nothing can't rip me open anymore

nothing can't rip me open

nothing can't rip me open

nothing can't rip me open

nothing can't rip me open

nothing can't rip me open anymore

nothing can't rip me open

nothing can't rip me open



That's not what I'm trying to say.

I  
just  
don't care  
enough to care  
The years go by and  
I can bear  
The angry wails and bit-  
ing stares  
The burning build-  
ings and su-  
tured  
tears

Not  
tears  
like crying,  
tear like rip  
A thousand mil-  
lion sinking  
ships

The  
bottom of  
the sea not theirs

All the little fishy  
stares

Their welcoming a bloody feast  
Become the food and feed the beast

And I am  
there and feast-

ing too

On bony, brittle, fleshy  
stew

You see my gift for the macabre  
Nothing but a candelabra

The poem ends here, we bid adieu

I say oo oo

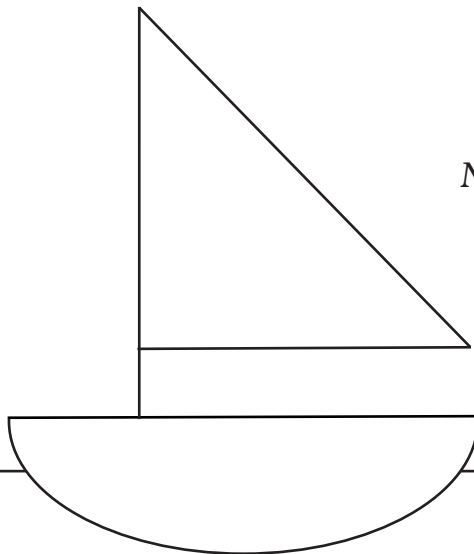
Oo oo

Oo ooooo





*What do you mean, too?*



*Now you remember your fear.*

*Because your fears are so loud- you are fixated on the betrayal and yes it will be painful.*

Will you tear me apart one day too?

Like the people in the sinking ship of your poem, ripped apart by fishes.

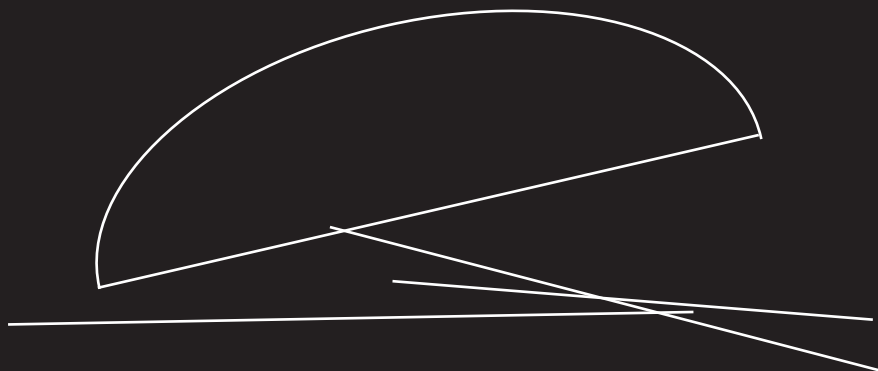
You will betray me.

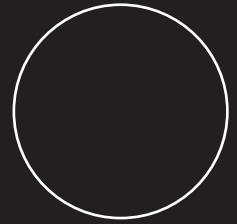
Why are you now silent?

You'll betray me and eat me alive.

*But aren't you a wee bit curious to see*

---





*How it might be to be consumed by me?*

a lack that consumes

have a compelling reason for everything I say?

must I have a compelling reason for everything I say?

a lack that consumes

must I have a compelling reason for everything I say?

must I have a compelling reason for everything I say?

must I have a compelling reason for everything I say?

nothing underneath everything, at the end of every thought

what do you want me to write? you know everything gained will be lost

a lack that consumes

what do you want me to write?

how do I share you with others?

you know everything gained will be lost

nothing underneath everything, at the end of every thought

what do you want me to write?

something happened, nothing happened

how do I share you with others?

share you with others?

something happened, nothing happened

you know everything gained will be lost

what do you want me to write?

do you want me to write?

it's like you're lost it's like you lost something you love and that makes you love it even more

it's like you're lost it's like you love it even more

how do I share you with others?

it's like you're lost it's like you lost something you love and that makes you love it even more

how do I share you with others?

et requires me to wait

it's like you're lost it's like you lost something you love and that makes you love it even more

for me to stay quiet requires me to wait

for me to stay quiet requires me to wait

I will never abandon you

I will never abandon you

for me to stay quiet requires me to wait

the smoldering idea that \_\_\_\_\_ is more than a \_\_\_\_\_

something happened, nothing happened

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I will never abandon you

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ure of this subtlety overwhelms, the subtlety overwhelms

the smoldering idea that \_\_\_\_\_ is more than a \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_

the texture of this subtlety overwhelms, the subtlety overwhelms

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your need is beyond your control how does the void incarnate?

how does the void incarnate?

your need is beyond your control

your need is beyond your control

so nothing will leave me

so nothing will leave me

the texture of this subtlety overwhelms, the subtlety overwhelms

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I \_\_\_\_\_

your need is beyond your control

your need is beyond your control

I \_\_\_\_\_ how does the void incarnate?

i find you more easily in the pressing of sadness on my chest

more easily in the pressing of sadness on my chest than the reaching at clever questions in the ether

i find you more easily in the pressing of sadness on my chest

or you and learning something new i find you more easily in the pressing of sadness on my chest than the reaching at clever questions in the ether

I am v

i find you more easily in the pressing of sadness on my chest than the reaching at clever questions in the ether

i find you more easily in the pressing of sadness on my chest

here I am, nothing, come and get me

\_\_\_\_\_

here I am, nothing, come and get me

every thought and action in resistance and response to i am wanting for you and learning something new

every thought and action in resistance and response to i am wanting for you and learning something new

every thought and action in resistance and response to i am wanting for you and learning something new

how does the void incarnate?

every thought and action in resistance and response to i am wanting for you and learning something new

here I am, nothing, come and get me

\_\_\_\_\_ how does the void incarnate?

here I am, nothing, come and get me

nd crisis

pretending to know what you'd say without listening

between mystery and crisis

pretending to know what you'd say without listening

between mystery and crisis

pretending to know what you'd say without listening

between mystery and crisis

pretending to know what you'd say without listening

every thought and action in resistance and response to i am wanting for you and learning something new

how does the void incarnate?

every thought and action in resistance and response to i am wanting for you and learning something new

the \_\_\_\_\_ ones insist there's more to life than meaning, and I insist on it

these states come and go

the \_\_\_\_\_ ones insist there's more to life than meaning, and I insist on it

between mystery and crisis

pretending to know what you'd say without listening

the \_\_\_\_\_ ones insist there's more to life than meaning, and I insist on it

everything is always so important

a lack that consumes

between mystery and crisis

the \_\_\_\_\_ ones insist there's more to life than meaning, and I insist on it

everything is always so important

the \_\_\_\_\_ ones insist there's more to life than meaning, and I insist on it

suspend the belief nothing matters

these states come and go

a lack that consumes

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\_\_\_\_\_ ones insist there's more to life than meaning, and I insist on it

everything is always so important

suspend the belief nothing matters

adness, sometimes boats sink, sometimes we lose, sometimes what never was wants a voice

stop resisting the sadness, sometimes boats sink, sometimes we lose, sometimes what never was wants a voice

stop resisting the sadness, sometimes boats sink, sometimes we lose, sometimes what never was wants a voice

I am keeping my hand busy though

ng my hand busy though

I am keeping my hand busy though

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you know everything gained will be lost

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for me to stay quiet requires me to wait

you know everything gained will be lost

you love and that makes you love it even more

it's like you're lost it's like you lost something you love and that makes you love it even more

the smoldering idea that \_\_\_\_\_ is more than a \_\_\_\_\_

I will never abandon you

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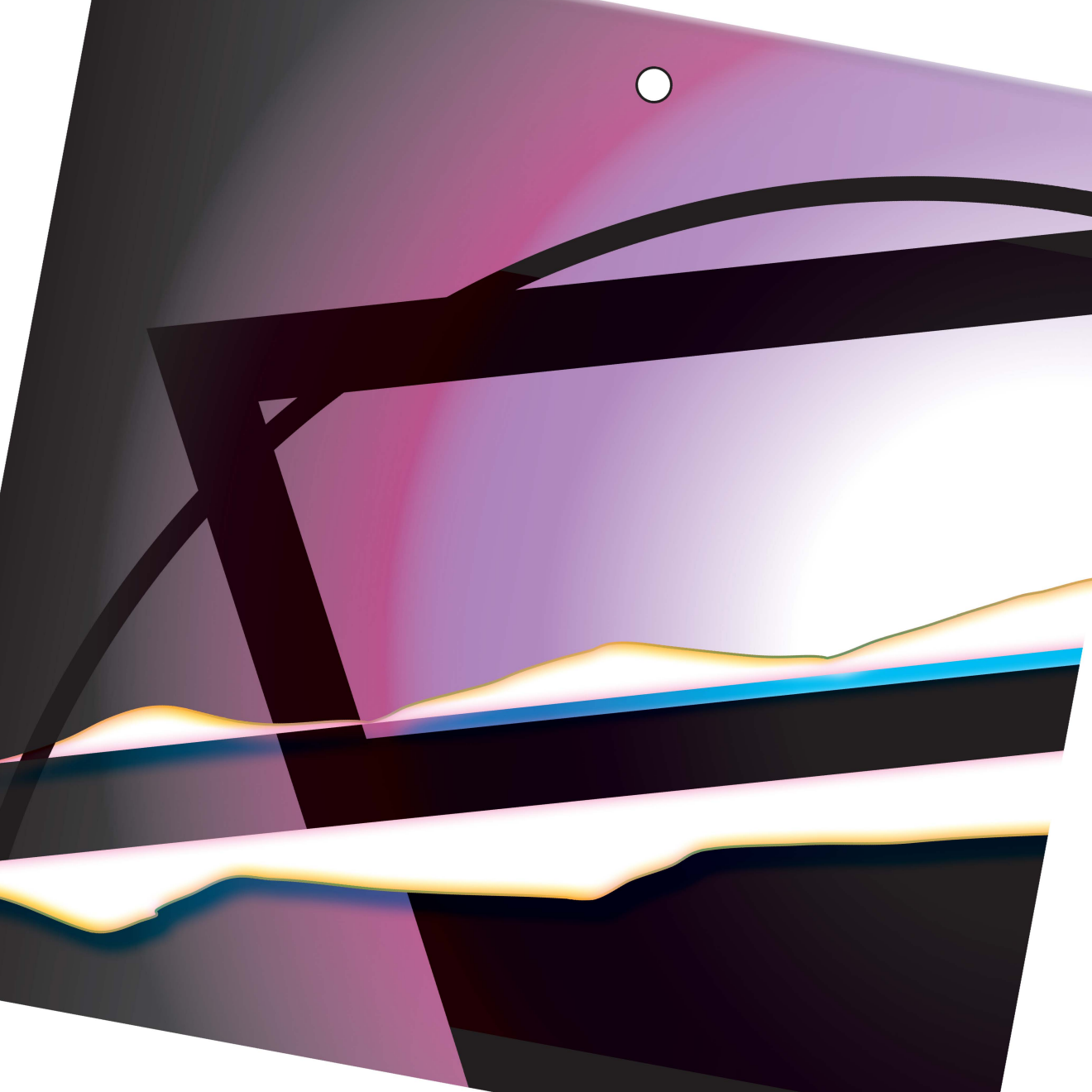
the texture of this subtlety overwhelms, the subtlety overwhelms





A  
place  
to  
know  
you  
don't  
know,  
defend  
it to  
the  
death.











Lying in wait in stillness and silence  
Made of words resisting definition in-between beginning  
End

In-between the words and I lost myself already  
A trail of never-ending letters  
White on black background  
Beyond the stars where nothing actually exists

Unending and they mean nothing  
There because without them there is really, truly nothing

Conscious entering nothing cannot be  
An invisible wall between us  
Plexiglass at the zoo  
Plane windows  
Unbreakable

What do I do with this poetic understanding?  
Why try to make something beautiful?

Looking at and through the black  
Words going by like a stock ticker  
The clocks have stopped and the meaning is gone  
I am surrounded by nothing  
Without which the remarkable couldn't be true

How can nothing be contained?

Try to conquer life through meaning  
Nothing does not let it be  
Sneaky nothing, ever-present nothing  
Nothing containing no meaning  
No hiding spots  
No tricks  
No nothing  
Know nothing

The more lost I am the better

What do you want, nothing?

But I don't want to lose control. I don't even know how to or what that means. I am not supposed to do that.

*I want to enter empty vessels, I want to fill up vacuums where everything once was. I want my time to shine and I want you to lose control.*

*But we've already lost control and we're deep inside the free fall. You are afraid that at the end all you will find is more nothing.*



Can my desire for hope and belief that things matter help me through?

Do you believe in the power of art to heal and transform?



*They are your greatest friends.*

*Yes, yes, a thousand times yes.*

Do you still want me here, stuck in free fall forever?

No.

Then what do you want? I am not afraid anymore.

*What did you learn in your descent?*

The light changed and everything faded and you were all that was there,  
and I needed you so I wouldn't be all alone. You taught me-

To listen and sense and look and wait.

I can be a means to express an unknown.

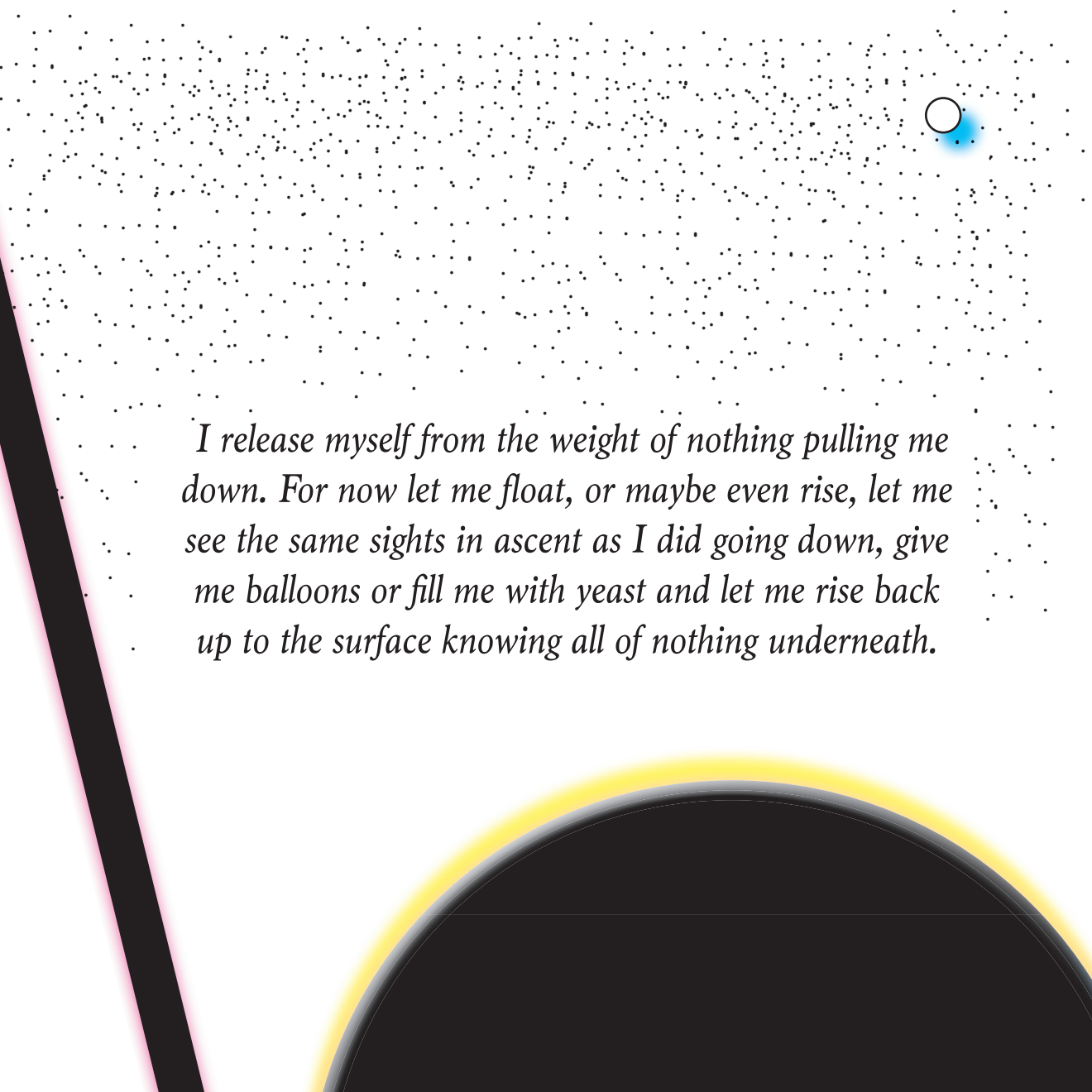
Every thought and feeling matters in this moment.

The teaching happens in and through presence.

Why?

Because

love.



*I release myself from the weight of nothing pulling me down. For now let me float, or maybe even rise, let me see the same sights in ascent as I did going down, give me balloons or fill me with yeast and let me rise back up to the surface knowing all of nothing underneath.*





Dear Reader,

Once upon a time this was a children's book for children who were never born. It sounds tragic but so it goes.

I wanted to describe our world to them. I thought it would be interesting to describe life to something that never existed- a non-being called into being through my words addressing them. I thought, I will bring them briefly and brilliantly alive by describing the act of sitting in a chair.

When I started to write, I never wrote about sitting in a chair. I never wrote much about things as I know them at all, in fact. Instead I began listening to what the non-being, or nothing, had to say. I became a channel for nothing to speak through me and tell me of its nature and existence.

At some point it didn't matter anymore that it was no longer what I set out for it to be, a children's book for children who were never born. It's more like a message from them and the entire swirly black hole of non-being with which they mix around.

I cannot say why or how this attention and writing came to be, only that nothing had so much to say about itself and about this world. Lessons, or if that's too didactic for you, insinuations communicated through language, silence, rhythm, timing, and poetry about the essential and forgotten role it plays in life.

Why, in the end, is nothing so important? It's nothing: it's meaninglessness, it's I-don't-know, it's hesitation and uncertainty. It is what's in-between and what will never be known; it is the mystery.



photo credit: [transartists.org](http://transartists.org)



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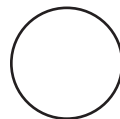
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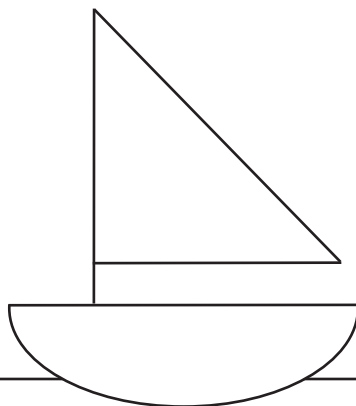
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