

Scent

Silence.

Silence, and the sheer dreadfulness that is the wholly encompassing vacancy of ... anything. Everything. Nothing.

There is nothing, there is nothing but these strange, straying thoughts muddling together -- struggling to form even the slightest hint of intelligent ideas. But how does one put together thoughts, when there is nothing to be thought?

Thoughts struggling to be thought, a mind grappling oh, so strongly to piece itself together. But why did it exist? Nothing existed, and yet something was forming. Something so strange, so new, yet possibly not new? New and old at the same time. But what was new and old?

This emptiness of the nothingness was all that existed, all that could exist, until suddenly...

Something was coming together, but what was it? It couldn't be anything, after all nothing existed. And yet it was beginning to exist.

So odd, so puzzling.

A strange, unique sensation, not felt at any point before (if anything could be felt at all, after all, what was feeling when feeling could not be felt?) began to swarm. Strong and rough, like something was pounding so roughly against something that could not possibly exist yet.

Swirling and building, growing ever so stronger. And stronger.

And stronger.

These oddities of thoughts that seemingly shouldn't be able to exist, and yet now do, were putting themselves together, finally, after a forever time, and what followed was a being young. Mature. New. Old. Being.

What was it, though? This being, coming together via thoughts that have suddenly come into existence? Nothing felt quite right, and yet at the same time ... it did. He. He was being. He was the thoughts putting themselves together.

And he was feeling these new sensations that never existed and always existed. They now existed, and they existed within him, and because he exists, now they too existed. But what were these sensations?

These feelings? This ... perception of something new and yet not. Something that has existed longer than he (far longer than he? How long has he existed now?) and yet was so very new, introducing itself now to this very new being that was taking form in this very new, yet old being of mind.

It was ... it couldn't be coming from him, could it? After all, he wasn't supposed to exist, and this was an existence that existed for as long as existing existed, surely. And yet ... the source ... it was him. It was him, after all. He existed. This ... thing. What was it called?

It was nothing, yet everything at the same time.

It was.

It was ...

A scent?

Pulse

What is this? What are you? You wonder -- thinking, wondering,

dreading--

about an existence that has yet to take form. You are aware, but you are not conscious.

You are conscious, but not yet aware. You do not exist. You do.

Sensical wonderings of babbling nonsense have you stumbling, bumbling over your very own thoughts. You exist, and yet you do not. Does this make sense? Maybe so. But also, maybe not so.

You do not have the understanding of rational concepts. After all, it does not exist. Not yet.

Just as you do not.

And yet, you do.

How do you exist? You are... what is the word? The word--

--what are words? There is nothing you know that could describe the utter feeling of something, nothing, everything that you feel at this very moment.

It shakes you to your very core. The core that you do not have.

Shaking, trembling, reverberating--

Completely nonsensical. Uncomfortable, disturbing. Dreadful.

And you can feel it.

Fever

burning--

burnt, burned, freezing, not--

uncomfortable and. pulsing

the emptiness it. faded and swirling and encompassing it made no sense nothing made sense it
can't make sense it should make sense nothing is working--

you stop,

quiet,

you focused and you thought and you tried tried tried --

don't

no,

this should hurt but you couldn't feel, anything

it should hurt it it stung you it burned you it burned you it burned buRNED BURNED BURNED

but you? could not feel,

but you were burning

and it--

HURT YOU, YOU HURT IT BURNED YOU IT WON'T STOP PLEASE

in the end it. it. it.

it

you could not think no help nothing there nothing here but you

and you

couldn't help? yourself could not

you couldn't stop burniNG WHY IS IT SO HOT

THEre waS no enD to the burning why

why why why why whY WHY WHY

and the pulsing wouldn't STOP

baddump baddump baddump sHUT UP

you couldn't focus

no focus with

no could not focus you need--

what do you need,

you needed.

to stop BURNING

but it won't

won't stop no--

why can't? why won't?

stop please

relief

need relief, you

no relief no nothing can't stop it

-- BADDUMP --

you ignore?

ignore, it ignored

won't stop so you ignored

and --

cold? no cold not possible but the

fire burning allowed cold

weren't aware of cold before but if this was cold it BIT AND CHEWED AND REFUSED TO
LET GO

like the burning

neither would let go neither--

-- BADDUMP --

shUT UP

you cried out

no voice

cried out no voice with no voice no sound has made

been made,

you just wanted to be free

but it wouldn't let you go why would it

when

you just wanted to understand

you wanted

you wanted

you wanted

you would never get not at all--

-- BADDUMP --

please,

it burns you cried out

Flesh

Beneath the surface, a heavy beat hammers. Slow, steady, becoming fast, quick. Never stopping, everlasting. Once it's started, it won't cease. Continuing evermore, lest life ends swift.

Warmth. Spread across, hot, burning, signaling beginnings of something new. Unknown. Seemingly ageless, yet ripples with years left to live.

Moving alongside deep pulses, throbbing forces odd, strange sensations. Uncomfortable, however, necessary.

Breathe. In, out.

Inhale, exhale.

Repeat yourself.

Careful.

Then -- through blazing -- pain.

Writhing, crackling together, your very being assembles itself. Carefully, slowly, painfully. Familiar pains, also foreign, unfaltering, carrying on ever onward. What was previously just heat, ignited self is now soreness, stinging, biting.

Beasts within ceaseless shadows, sinking their teeth into sensitive ridges and protrusions.

Gasps for help, feeling instinctively this all needed but not knowing reasons.

Why must you suffer?

Vision

The void was cold and empty. An unknown entity that swallowed everything whole with no amount of restraint. It tortured those unlucky enough to fall into its grasp, finding sick humor in the cruel treatment it handled them with. And once that unlucky someone found themselves within its hold... well, there was no escaping it at that point. It would endlessly torment them until their sanity was nonexistent. Until there was nothing left to abuse.

Those were the thoughts running through his mind as his consciousness finally came to wake. His vessel was slower to follow, but his mind was running wild with more and more thoughts. Behind his eyelids, was darkness that mimicked the vacant emptiness of the void that haunted him for what seemed like an eternity.

He stirred, his body shuddering as he struggled to force himself fully awake. His eyelids refused to budge, and it was frankly beginning to get annoying. He just wanted to wake up, escape the void for once in his existence. If he could just --

He pushed his eyelids apart, blinking once, then twice. His sight was blurry at first, unused to the new function of his body. Well, of course, it was his first and only body, and he'd just woken up in it for the first time ever! How exciting! And it was dark, he noticed, but no longer was it as dark as the everlasting depths of the void.

He felt a rumble, deep within his chest and throat, as he pushed himself to his feet. He wondered if he should be worried about it at first, but he decided that whatever was happening in his body was natural. So he ignored it. He settled back onto his haunches clumsily, almost slipping backwards before he managed to properly balanced himself.

Underneath his flesh, he could feel the muscles straining under all the new movements he was making. He rolled his shoulders, his head, stretched his legs and flicked his tail. Getting used to every new function of this new vessel of his. No longer was he just a bodiless consciousness floating in nothingness. Now he was... something. He wasn't complete though, no, he knew that for sure. He felt incomplete, but he wasn't quite sure what was missing yet.

Oh well, he figured he'd figure it out later.

When he was done playing around, he finally decided to examine his current surroundings. What he saw caught him off guard, for the moment, as it was unsettling, to say the least.

The ground beneath him was flat, hard. Made of stone, he realized. Occasionally little cracks would stretch across, forming little webs. And all around, encompassing everything in a thick cover of dull, intimidating gray, was a deep fog. It floated ominously around him. Like it was barricading him in for some reason.

Well that was certainly odd, he thought. But nothing too concerning yet. Hopefully. He decided he should probably try to find a way out of here, if there was one. With his luck, there would be no way out and this was just another trick of the void, to taunt him with freedom only to pull it out from under him.

A sardonic smile stretched across his face. He almost expected it at this point.

Well, whatever was the cause of him being here, he would like it to leave him alone, please. He would like to leave now. Right now. He is being very polite right now, so please be polite back.

With a huff, he got to his feet and began walking.

As he walked, he felt eyes on him. Or that's what he assumed it felt like. It was extremely uncomfortable, and it made his skin and fur crawl. Like it agreed with him, his pelt began bristling along his spine. He idly wondered if whatever was watching him right now was the thing that brought him here.

Along with this, he also began to notice that it was almost like he wasn't even moving at all. Of course, he was walking, he knew he was. But the fog never moved. He was practically walking in place. Another rumble, this time more agitated, shook his throat, and he bolted forward.

He was getting impatient. (He was scared.)

But the instant he began to run, the ground seemed to shift beneath his feet, like it was alive and moving. And then he was falling.

He stumbled downward, tumbling down a slope that definitely wasn't there before. It was like it came out of nowhere, right in front of his own eyes.

He hit the ground hard, and gasped out a painful wheeze. That hurt a lot, he thought, sprawled out on the ground. He got to his feet after a moment, shaking off the pain and ignoring the slight throbbing in his head.

The eyes felt closer now. It was getting increasingly more uncomfortable.

He looked around. He'd fallen... somewhere, but there was still fog all around him. Rolling, mocking him. Behind him was a solid stone wall. There was no going back up there. So, of course, the only way was forward!

As he thought that, the fog shifted suddenly, and as it pulled back it revealed...

Something.

Somethings?

They were tall, green looking things. They stood tall and proudly, with their limbs angled upward toward the sky. They almost looked like they were dancing. When he looked closer, he noticed they had dozens, maybe hundreds of tiny protrusions stretching out from their slim bodies.

They looked sharp, he thought. Almost like... He lifted a paw to his face, stretching out his toes. He glanced in between his paw and the strange plant, noticing similarities. So the little protrusions were their own types of claws, he guessed. And they had many more than he did.

As he looked over the strange plants, he noticed something odd. Hanging off one of the plants' limbs, was a... feather.

It was pitch black, and looked not unlike his fur.

He shifted.

Something in him told him not to do what he was about to do. It would definitely hurt, it said.

Shut up, he told it, and immediately reached up to grab the feather.

He regretted it immediately.

A sharp, stinging pain shot through his arm as soon as he touched the feather. He had pressed down, trying to hook his claws into it to get a good grasp on it, but what he had failed to consider...

was that the feather was hooked onto the plant's claws.

His paw pad had been pierced immediately by the sharp little claws.

If he cared to pay enough attention, he would think someone was laughing at him right now.

But he didn't care, so he focused on nursing his injured paw instead. As he did so, he shot a nasty glare at the many-clawed plant. Which of course didn't respond. Or react. Because it couldn't. It was a plant. He pouted, looking over his pad. There was red liquid dribbling down it, dampening the thin strands of fur at its edges.

He scowled and began giving it a few quick licks, wincing as it stung with every touch.

When he felt it was okay, he checked it over again. The bleeding had stopped. He shifted himself around so he could settle his paw on the ground. He gingerly placed his paw down, and when there was nothing but a slight sting, he moved his attention away from his paw.

The clawed plants were gone. He had a slight suspicion that the fog had something to do with it, but there wasn't really that much proof for it so he opted to brush it off. For now.

He pushed onward, into the fog. The fog that never moved. The fog that seemed to have a mind of its own. He shuddered.

Eventually, the fog parted once more to reveal -- a river. At least, he thought it was a river. He couldn't really tell, with the fog cutting off either end of the river and all.

It was strangely formed, settled within a deep fissure within the rocky ground. Like the earth had split and water had taken up the space.

He stepped closer to the river, and looked over into the water and --

flinched back.

He moved back forward, blinking a few times. There was something in the water. His back arched slightly, and with that movement the reflection mimicked him. He paused. He leaned back, seeing the reflection doing the same. Huh.

He tilted his head, watching his reflection copy his every action. So his reflection was him? He narrowed his eyes. The striking blue eyes in the water narrowed back. Well that was a relief, he thought. At least it wasn't something that was going to hurt him.

The next few moments were spent playing around in the water with his reflection, him being entirely fascinated with the concept of reflections. He was so distracted with what he was doing that he almost missed the figure looming behind him.

His eyes glanced upward, moved down, then snapped back up. In the reflection, something was moving above his head. He froze, feeling his limbs and muscles lock up. With his reflection, he saw how bugged his eyes had gotten.

Over his head, the -- thing, he couldn't tell what it was -- settled itself above him, its -- mouth? -- stretching wide with what looked like bloody teeth.

Deciding he wasn't taking a chance, he immediately bolted forward into the water. He flailed until he was on the other side of the riverbank, and he whipped around to face the creature that had crept up behind him. Only to see --

flowers.

They were flowers, he realized, blinking several times. He felt himself slump over in relief, muscles letting go of all tension that had built up in his momentary fear. A sharp breath escaped his lips, and he lifted his head.

He carefully stepped back into the water, feeling the cool liquid roll over his dark pelt. He swam more cautiously, legs kicking as he approached the other side of the river. He pulled himself up, feeling the water weighing him down as it drip-dropped from strands of his fur.

He shook himself out best he could, before turning his attention back onto the flowers.

They were very pretty, he decided. When they were behind him, they had multiplied by the dozens, forming a sort of wall with each other. But they weren't intimidating to him in the least.

They were brightly colored, bright oranges and deep blues. Their petals, which he had thought were teeth (he inwardly cackled at himself at his own panic) were sharp looking. They stretched out every which way. He felt their appearance was almost mimicking something, but his mind refused to bring it forward.

He leaned forward impulsively, to sniff the flowers. Immediately, his nostrils were filled with a very flowery smell. He didn't know how else to describe it but flowery. Whatever flowers should smell like, this would be it.

He leaned back, decidedly pleased.

Then, behind him, he felt something shift. He turned around curiously, and as he expected the river behind him had vanished. The fog rolled over, as if eating the ground below it. He turned his head back around, but where there were once flowers there was --

A tall rock formation. Slim in appearance, with a piece stretching out forward. On that jutted out piece, a -- bird -- was perched calmly. He paused.

Not unlike his own black fur, the bird's feathers were dark as the void he had left behind. It was a sleek looking bird, with beady black eyes that seemed to pierce his very being. Instinctively, he stepped back.

The bird's head tilted, and for a moment it did nothing.

And then it opened its mouth, its beak. Its beak stretched open wide, like something was supposed to come out of it. Then it stretched out its arms, its wings, and bolted upward into the sky. He felt himself stumble backward onto his rear.

In his daze, he thought briefly, well now he knew what those flowers must have been mimicking.

Out from the fog, more birds came. Each as dark as the last, as if they were mere copies of each other. They swarmed together, feathers falling everywhere as they flew ominously all around him.

Whatever they wanted to do, there was nothing he could have done about it. All he was able to do was watch as they congregated together, almost fusing together. Creating an amalgamation of limbs and feathers and beady black eyes that seemed almost vacant but also so, terrifyingly intelligent.

And all he could do, was watch this all happen before his eyes. Until his vision went black.

Taste

Memories begin fading as fog overshadows the mind, my thoughts blurring though they had once been mostly, completely coherent for the first time ever proper, I feel like choking with my chest clogging up tightly like something had gripped onto it and started squeezing, and with each passing moment it gets harder and harder to breathe, and it scares me and I don't like being scared but there's no leaving anymore, there was never any leaving, and then and then and then I feel as though something is prying open my mouth and I try to bite down but there's nothing and I can't get away and I feel panic rising it's swallowing me whole and it's starting to hurt, I don't have control over any part of my body and I can't fight back I could never fight back and I want it all to stop and my mind is clouding over but I need to pay attention to what's happening and suddenly I feel something on my tongue, it stings and burns and it feels like pain, and it didn't hit that strong at first but after seconds it burns brightly and settles deep within my core like it wants to tear me apart, and now I want to cry and choke and gag, and in between the blazing pain I almost miss the entity harassing me approach once more, this time digging down my throat, like the pain it forced upon me was just a distraction for what it had really been trying to do, and I squirm as an uncomfortable, stiff feeling builds up proper in my chest, different from what I had felt before, more physical almost, and the entity seems to be trying to dislodge it, helping me maybe I don't know I can't tell anymore, and then something snaps and suddenly I feel lighter than I ever had before, like I'm floating and I can see a word and it is me and I am Bandersnatch.

Lullaby

Sonnet

Little Beast, child of the shadows,
From where you are, can you hear my voice?
Listen closely, as the world around you grows,
And for the first time you can finally rejoice.

You are a bright shining star,
And you will break through the darkest of nights,
The world before you will surely leave its scars,
But its cruelty will mean nothing compared to its sights.

But be warned, my shadow child,
Some scars will be too deep to fade,
On its earth, this world carries many reviled,
And you will be on your own, no hope for aid.

So, rejoice my child, you are finally free from your chains,
But do not mistake freedom for free reign.