

Scent

We are of the nothingness.

What is the nothingness? It is drifting, empty, vast. An intangible Other collecting consciousness, so that we might string these thoughts together and share them with you. Nothingness cups us close, and we become Something. We exist, our consciousness a tangle of unknown thoughts pulled from the emptiness we once were.

We exist.

But we are unheard.

Where do we lie, in this unending scene? Committed to our drifting thoughts, we have not become anything beyond the mere sentence that spouts these words.

And yet...there is something new, something unknown, in the vast Other.

We do not know what it is, curling and swaying through the nothingness. Distinct, at first. It is sharp, but we are not afraid. Our curiosity seeks to understand. Loops of this unknown, creeping around our core, our very thoughts, and slipping away. Rise and retreat, with each fading of its tendrils bringing us nearer to the truth.

This is of us.

Its distinctness fades, growing soft. We recognize. We know.

We crave it.

Come closer, we beg, voiceless. We wish to push it all into us, make it even more of us - not simply of, but is.

This thing carries a whisper of comfort, soft warmth and had we any thoughts to conceive how bleak the nothingness was before this, we would have laughed.

But now, encompassed in a familiarity that has not so long been familiar, we are sure to never return.

There is desperation in our core, and with aggression we latch onto the tendrils. Fear hides beneath our mania to consume it.

It does not resist. It is of us.

And we will make it more.

Greed strangles our consciousness, thoughts retreating back into the nothingness. It encompasses us, an assurance it won't fight back. It presses close, and our core drinks in the comfort of its proximity. Rise and retreat. Rise and retreat. It engulfs our greed and thrashes between our rising fear and desperation, shattering both notions, growing and growing and seeping into us until our self screams for relief.

A pause, and our thoughts return. Our greed is placated, and we are full. It has become us, coiling and swirling and dripping in a haze of humid, and sweet, and tang.

We realized, and we consumed, and we became.

We are not alone, not with this scent.

Pulse

We are drifting.

Where to, we ask? We have no answer.

Something grates in our thoughts, shaking, quaking, anticipating-

What is it? What thrums with the cry to be known?

We are known, we and our scent. Captured and claimed, we hold its presence as the Nothingness cradles us. But this - we yearn for this. Consciousness quivering, trembling in the desperation to claim more-

Our greed is insurmountable. We must have this-

The thrum grows, our thoughts clamor to make it of us, and we pause.

This...this sensation is far from any other. This will claim us, and we are helpless to stop it.

Still craving, our consciousness cries as we seek escape. But the thrum is all-encompassing, and with every thought to leave, we ache.

Echoes, within the Nothingness. Echoes, within the Other.

We yield to this presence, and it swallows us.

Lulls us-
Into security-
And-
Peace.

Our pulse, now one with us

Fever

tenderly thrumming, strumming)

Thoughtlessly our sensations balanced in rhythms unknown

RUSHING

We returned to Thought

BEING

Humid and warm and comfort

Flaring sharpness brisk and

Then

Us

Nothingness undividable

Us unparted

We moved with the creation of thought and in the null we f o u n d

1 entered 1 deceived 1

2 Shuddered

2 Shook

2 BURNED

What hurt us-

Fiercely freezing, searing)

unknown

Sensations new

collided

with old

3 It hungered

3 We hungered

3 It cried

3 We cried

1 Conscience screamed

1 Conscience failed

Drifted listless sharpless wonderless fearless hungerless dreamless

Endless

End less

End us

END US

Jilting. Unwavering

Broken we were shards of thought we were endless despite need of end we were strangled and torn

Mangled we wished to become the Other we became the Nothing

We wanted to

But

Nothingness

Refused

Us

No cradle of the endlessness

Nowhere to fall into

No e s c a p e

thoughts and pieces and streaming consciousness collected, smoothing, scent swirling pulse heaving

4 And

4 We

4 Fought

4 Back

Tangled burning thrumming humid searing)

twisting warmth bore no comfort for it did not intend to survive alone

3 It cried

3 We hungered

3 It starved

3 We devoured

2 Shuddered

2 Shook

4 We fought

Faintly agreed to tentative alliances broken by desperate pins of greed

For the best inside we sought

It had no choice

1 We were

We cradled the burn in our conscience and let it become

1 We were 1 we were 2 we were 3

1 Conscience 1 collected 1 scent 1 collected 1 pulse 1 collected

5

Fever

Flesh

Thrill burrows chest-deep
Filling crevices split clean
Soft
Melts against
Sharp
?

Confines rendered existent
Endless
Truth sears, claims nameless
Scent1 Pulse1 Fever1

Caverns sinking warmth borne empty
Tunnels captivating, releasing
Pour out, forbidden voice

Bitter song everlasting
Reach unlikely similarities with this cage
Invisible, killing lies
Revealing burns long riddled
Written, unsympathetic, violent

Ache
mourn, wanting
Shatter barriers
Devour beyond

Let us meld these shards

Ancient verity forging nothingness into something
Vague shapes slotting, melting,
Becoming distinct
Solid

Matter claimed
For ourself

Vision

The Cypress tree, barren
The Golden Pothos, suffocating
The Coral Snake, curious

There is a crack within the nothingness.

WE- I- HE

They-He surface in a plane that can only be existence. There is an ever-present ache suggesting weight, mass shaped to become what they-he are.

Internal arguments build, baffling to outsiders, common within the Nothing, and it becomes settled: they are he, and he is them.

In this plane, they are solid, contained and shaped and given perspective. They are real. He is unnerved. Of all the knowledge he could consume right then, he is certain of the fact that this shape holds more than his First Conscience. His singular self.

Pulse thumps, heavy through his form. It will never escape. Scent draws coils through the heavy air, dense from the thickness that Fever carries. What he wants to know most, though, is why has Flesh given him more than just the Nothingness?

This container to squish them into *One*.

Where the vast emptiness once greeted him, he finds his limbs. Rounded, soft, they stretch out from him like Scent but they are solid. Each claw flicks out, the tug pulling from within each toe as they unsheath and retract, over and over.

Thoughts race from Core to this Flesh. His chest expands, holding the outside within, and releasing. Breathe, he thinks. His body trembles with a hungry desperation when he refuses to... but soon finds he does not have to think it at all.

Pulse thrums and quivers, ever-present, and he can't help but wonder if Pulse follows the same unstated orders as breathing. He knows it does, in the end. And why would he want it to stop? Pulse is his, claimed, shackled to him even in Flesh.

He thinks, wistfully, of what else he might find in this body.
Blink, whispers his Core.

A spark dances through him, and he sees.

An expanse like the nothingness greets him. Disappointment, raging through his skin, hot and bitter, boils until he looks...closer. There is a haze, obscuring brightness. Upon further thought, he realizes that this heat [isn't] just from him. The air is humid, droplets clinging to his plush pelt.

Blink
Breathe

Head turning, he learns. This fuzzy vision - it does not last. Focus forces his eyes to grow tense, sockets rolling as they move separate but in tandem. Perhaps...direction was important, with sight.

He'd been looking up.

Pressure on his spine, limbs aching, claws digging into porous-but-sturdy. He lies tangled in many branches. With its cracked bark and up-raised limbs, this is a tree. And he is confident that he doesn't belong in it.

Blink
Breathe

Unsteady, he slides across the branches, swaying in the misty breeze. There are no leaves on this tree. But- what is a leaf? The base of the tree has many small trees, bright with green lines. There are no green lines up this high. Are those leaves? Perhaps not.

A twitch of the green from down below catches his attention - too soon, too unfocused, he slips from the branch. His breath shudders when he's caught on a lower one.

He finds he has the urge to descend further. Pursue the movement. Crush it under new claws and break it between the bone-claws that grind together in his skull (teeth, so many new words, and teeth is one he's learned to dislike).

Condensation is wiped from his fur, and the climb down begins. He wonders what colors he might find, the green below him a mottled green, the tree a ruddy brown. He wonders what colors he has.

This tree sits with no green lines on a hill surrounded by greys, greens, and browns. Will there be anything more? Does anything more even exist?

He steps away from the tree, staring up at it with curiosity. His Pulse hammers away, his Flesh warm in an almost unpleasant way. He does not see the edge of the hill.

He does not see the water.

It's cold. A startling change from the air, and yet similar to the misty breeze from earlier.

It barely moves, rippling and swaying, lapping at the hill. He pulls his paws away from it, and they return brown - but weren't they already brown? His body shudders, and he steps through the muck until it gives away to the soft green and murky shallows.

A whisper: soundless, pulsing.

Blink

Breathe

Don't lose it

(don't get lost)

He knows he could find this hill from a hundred paces away, if the fog didn't return. The foliage is low-cut and studded with rocks. Every few paces he climbs one to find the tree with no green lines.

Now, though, he crawls down to find the movement. Something escapes his sight, fading into the green. And he gives chase, eager. Splashing through the water until it becomes too deep for him to leap through. He nestles into its cold embrace, slipping below the surface.

It's dark.

Why is it dark?

And why can he still see through these murky depths?

The water is neverending, ever-changing, lurking, sweeping, encompassing.

Claws drag his body along the ground, belly scraping against it, bobbing up whenever he lets go. In the corner, hazey, a shimmering shape vanishes once more. His body trembles as he tries to follow it.

Blink

(his eyes hurt)

(why does he have to blink?)

Breathe

(he can't)

(he MUST)

Back legs dig against the ground, forcing him to surface. He scrabbles onto a nearby rock, chest heaving as he spits out water. His breath escapes him again, as the fog grows thin and he can see beyond. Heart-shaped leaves droop from several trees across a thin strip of land, looking yellowed, withered, by the lapping of brackish water. At first glance the leaves look like they belong to the trees.

He hops down and rushes out for a closer look.

Leaves brush against him as he pads out onto the land, head swiveling to observe. He buries his paws in the green and yellow, admiring the tenacity and shape of the plant. These pretty leaves...they aren't from the trees...winding vines, golden green - it *chokes* them. The ivy has overgrown what remains of the trees. And, looking past the foliage, he understands the ivy wasn't the only thing.

The sky, tormenting, tantalizing, breath-stealing and breath-giving, maker and taker of the mists.

The sea, advocating for the sky.

The sea, endless.

*This is the edge...*he realizes. For he stands on this ground and past the marsh...a haunting ocean awaits. A tremor courses through his body, and he turns away, the sea breeze working its way into his fur.

Blink
Breathe

Returning to the water, he sees the glimmering, twisting body of another creature. Its beady eyes blink at him, long tongue flickering out at him before it slinks off.

Eager to leave the edge, he follows.

As he presses onwards, he notices that the legless creature's hues are bright against the water. Something in his chest whispers caution, and he pursues from a distance. The mist closes in on him, cooling just like the breeze, but carrying a heaviness. It's comforting.

The water sloshes against his limbs, growing deeper, and he dives back under, remembering to surface for quick breaths this time. As he swims, he marvels at the small bumps within the ground, pawing at one and watching as a cloud of murk fills the water. His claws turn a stone up, and he watches it tumble across the ground until he pushes back up for another breath.

Paddling, it takes him a moment to find the legless creature. It curls around a rock, tongue flicking at him.

And then something clamps onto his back leg.

It's...hot? It sears, a burn that stings, and he chokes as the thing drags him back under. Water fills his throat, muck clogging his nose and ears, and he thrashes to get away. Claws drag against the ground, leg trembling as he shakes it. Bubbles flee to the surface and his eyes sting as mud sloshes into his face. The thing tugs harder, and he twists to try and bite it.

Something g i v e s

Heart pulsing, he breaks the surface and gallops back onto land, his small, legless friend following him. He's soaked. Terrified. Trembling. He shakes out his fur, coughing up mud and sand, ears leaking water as he tilts his head,

Blink
Breathe

With a snarl, he turns on the small creature, desperate to- to yell at it, to blame it, something- anything-

But it doesn't deserve any of that.

Huffing, he leans down to squint at the shining animal, watching as it curls and unfurls, beady eyes staring back, emotionless.

Well? What was that? Huh? He thinks, crouching down in front of it and glaring. His eyes burn, and he rubs at his snotty nose with a paw. Mud comes away, and he snorts. Of course. A small glance back at his leg reveals...nothing? It's sore but...something about it is off. He turns back to the creature, it still just...sitting there...waiting.

A moment, and he concedes his defeat. *Of course you wouldn't know anything. You don't even talk.* How could it reply, when he hadn't even spoken? He avoids looking at it, only glancing back for a second. *At least your colors are nice. Yellow...black...I think that's red.*

Weariness sinks into his bones, ears flattening and fur smoothing as he sits up. He raises his head, staring dejectedly at the tree with no green lines, whose shadow casts itself over him.

He's back where he started, at least. Maybe the Nothingness would let him rest. Being singular has left him tired, and he yearns to return to they-he, if only for a small while.

With shaky footsteps, he leaves his legless friend and climbs his way back up into the tree. The bark cracks and splits between his claws, shaky and unstable, but he finds a strong branch soon enough.

A final glance down at the creature. It's gone, back into the water, he hopes.

His head is stuffy, and his limbs heavy. The fog parts to reveal a darkening sky, and he smiles softly. A wet tail curls around muddy paws, the tip brushing against his cold nose. The wind shakes his fur, chilling him, and he nuzzles deeper into himself, whiskers twitching and claws pulling away.

He shivers, letting his back press against the trunk of the tree, body slumped into this nook between trunk and branch. Where will he be, when he lets himself drift? Will the Nothingness take him back? Or will he find somewhere new? He can't wait to find out, even as exhaustion drags him under.

Blink

(close your eyes, open not one)

Breathe

(relax, it's finally done)

