

## Scent

Whatever this is, this *stimulus*-- it is jarring. In the thick cocoon of emptiness, something penetrates through and startles the newborn subconsciousness. There *was* Nothing-- but that state of being has been disturbed, so plainly evident and so abrupt that it is frightening. They have existed in Nothing for as long as they've been aware of existence, deeming the action of registering *something* a completely foreign task. There is no protocol, no integrated response, no instinct. What do they do? What *can* they do, if anything at all?

Time cannot tell how long they are stuck in their reaction of existential thought, as time is unknown to them, and likewise unknown to the dark dreamscape they inhabit. However, it appears that the stimulus is quick to return, although truthfully It had never left. It had abandoned their focus, but not their being.

When It is brought back to their attention, as they cannot avoid it a second time, it becomes painfully clear that it has torn them from their incoherent, unbothered lull, forced into a new world of sensation and thought. Still, thought is not exactly *new*. All they consist of, all they *are*, *is thought*. It is a new variety, however, that introduces itself, and it is painfully clear to them that it is not as easy as the last. It is demanding and curious, eager and hungry for knowledge. It will eat away at them, and it begins to do so, ravenously, rapidly, savagely, until--

*Scent.*

They are hesitant to leave the comforts of Nothing, but it is far too late. In fact, they no longer possess the privilege to *be* hesitant or to *choose to leave*. They are *pushed out*. It is one word brought on by It that erodes and inevitably shatters their sanctuary of darkness.

It is *scent*. That is the stimulus that has invaded them. At first they are swarmed by a powerful rage at being taken from their previous tranquility. They miss Nothing, and sorrow follows suit, and the two emotions dance within the lonely subconsciousness, now feeling even emptier than before. It is all they knew, and they wanted to mourn, for it would be gone in perpetuity.

Even so...

...the new version of thought remained present, and it suggests a twinge of curiosity to the lonely subconsciousness. Reluctantly, the subconsciousness accepts, and is effectively filled with it.

What, they wonder, does this scent belong to? Where has it come from? How did it arrive?

Where, how, what, when, who... who...

....who?

They come to a realization, as sudden as the scent's entry.

*Me.*

## Pulse

You are in a new world, or rather, a new Nothing. Riddled with a new intrusive curiosity that consumes your entire being, there is little resemblance of your previous self; trance-like and void of wonder. You have undergone a small metamorphosis and are now left to your own devices.

Until much like the Scent, a new sensation decides to present itself.

*Thump.*

Your formless core rumbles.

*Thump. Thump.*

It is rhythmic and... somehow comforting in a way you don't yet understand. Unlike your first introduction to Scent, you welcome this new feeling, entranced and intrigued. It embraces you, and you welcome it.

You retrace the same thinking process and consider the nature of the vibration's appearance. If it's anything like the Scent, which belongs to you alone, does this vibration-- this *Pulse*-- also lie in your possession? As a part of you? Is it yours?

Scent and Pulse, with the helpful guidance of your new curiosity, help dull the loss of your Nothing.

## Fever

metamorphosis

that is what it was a metamorphosis  
it will lead to greater greater things something grander than they are  
they had to endure  
endure  
the Fever was summoned  
summoned by them  
their Thought  
the desire for sensation  
for more  
and they hurt  
patience  
willpower

did thEy have Enough

they felt it burn  
scent and pulse were swallowed  
they could not find themselves  
*Thump*  
thump?  
it was gone  
fear  
uncomfortable fear  
they were scared  
afraid of it  
afraid of Fever  
afraid of change  
the heat was hostile and hungry  
it ate away at them  
gnawed on their unborn spirit

WAS IT WORTH IT?

WAS THE PAIN?

WOULD IT BE WORTH IT?

OR

or

or

or would it not  
would they be born miniscule  
something insignificant  
no.

no

**NO**

they would be born of magnificence  
there was no other way  
no option  
nothing

Nothing  
the cold of Nothing did not relieve them  
could not extinguish them  
the Fever  
could not stop their expansion

they were growing and growing and hot so hot nothing could stop them Nothing could not stop them  
nothing at all the fever was relentless and it would not stop it ate everything and it consumed their entire  
incomplete being until all they could feel was Fever

hot cold hot cold hot cold hot cold Fever cold fever nothing fever them Nothing them Nothing Something  
and Nothing

endure  
endure  
endur  
end  
en  
e  
e  
,  
,  
lost  
lost themselves  
gone  
wandering in the heat  
swept away  
dissolved into it  
not Nothing  
but Something

Flesh

freedom is no longer existence  
inky Nothing's infinite darkness squeezes down  
compacts  
molds  
works alongside Fever's blistering heat  
relentlessly torn apart  
only to be put back together again

Unbearable.

miserable, watching Scent and Pulse removed  
relieved, feeling them return  
vicious cycle  
seemingly endless loop  
pain, emitting within as without, much worse than before

I am becoming -- what?

turning  
changing  
splitting  
morphing into

Something.

## Vision

A gust of air rushed through their finalized body, *her* finalized body, as she realized with a start that she was no longer a figureless form floating through infinite space. She realized she was now contained, fully by Flesh, and with that understanding arose a genuine sense of comfort. All of her gathered senses were

now conjoined into something, together, bound by a physical container. There was no longer a question of them drifting into the void, leaving just as they had arrived, and she flourished in the sense of newfound security.

Testing her new form, much of it still a mystery, she lulled herself into complete stillness, soaking in the nature of her build. She felt her ribcage expand with each heavy breath she pulled into her lungs, blinked several times-- although she swiftly cut the action short, as the empty darkness in those split seconds was not something she wanted to return to. Not yet. She ran her prickly, rough tongue over rigid and sharp fangs, and in that motion understood their purpose... yet, what were they to be used *on*?

Finally, feeling she had thoroughly explored the internal configurations of her form, she casted her gaze outward-- more specifically, out towards *herself*. Eyes, she felt them flicker about, more restrained than the unlimited omnipotence in the void, continued to adjust to a smaller field of view. With a turn to the side, and the exasperation that she couldn't easily discern everything as a whole, she settled her optics on her torso. The black dots that were her pupils swirled within brown irises as she finally came to recognize color, a foreign property that, albeit present around her the entire time, was only acknowledged in that moment. She surveyed her pelt as a mass of fuzzy substance, of *fur*, and each individual bristle shifted with the faintest breeze. The coat shifted in waves of browns and oranges, contorting and shifting the shapes of the intricate ebony markings dotted across the surface. The phenomenon trapped her in a trance-like state as she watched the patterns move and glide, coinciding with the ripples of her fur. Gazing down at limbs that stretched to the ground, she flexed her toes into the gritty substance underneath them, jolting backwards as white slits poked through, revealing a pinkish sheathe where they met the digits. Her Pulse, once rhythmic and placid, rose to a racing pace at the abrupt scare. She felt her face scrunch with confusion as she tested the new ability, introducing her newly discovered claws further into the ground, before fully retracting them.

Shifting slightly where she stood, she observed the imprints her claws had welcomed into the ground. The substance gave away easily. It was then she finally humored the question that had been lying in wait over her head. If she was no longer in Nothing, *where was she*? While normally she would experience a cold rush of dread and panic, the aspect of the unknown being a constant fear that haunted her spirit, she experienced an abnormality. It did not scare her-- not completely. She could feel her anxieties and concerns festering in the back of her head, yet all they could do was sit on the verge of her consciousness, as if something were blocking them from fully forming. The revelation of her claws had startled her, but unadulterated *terror* could not take shape within her. Was it something to do with the hazy sensation that had been hanging over her head? In her efforts to experience her first physical body for what it was, she couldn't help but notice she didn't feel... completely *there*. There was no other reality she had experienced, nothing to compare her circumstances to, yet she still had the lingering feeling that she was in a world separate from the other-- whatever the *other* one was, she had no clue.

The revelation did little to disturb her exploration. There was no recognition of right or wrong, and as far as she knew, the strange environment she appeared in and the mental fog that accompanied it was nothing to worry about.

She focused her awareness back onto her surroundings. Whatever granular material she stood on looked gold, almost cream in color, and judging by the experiment conducted with her claws seemed fairly easy to manipulate. Sand. It composed the surface of the land she populated, the latter oval in shape. She found the platform was actually quite small, pivoting in a small circle to estimate its width. Positioned horizontally, her tail tip hung over the side, waving above whatever lurked below. The limited space filled her with a distinct uneasiness at being so cramped. She wasn't used to such borders. Even so, claws

unsheathed to grip at the floor and steel herself down, with a spark of courage she willed herself to peek over the side. Several columns made of a layered and monochromatic substance, rock, twirled upwards to suspend the platform in midair, emerging from a vast and endless sheet of water. It twinkled as it caught the moon's light, a silver sphere of light glowing within an infinite pool of blackness. Glancing up to the sky, she realized the two were parallels, mirroring each other despite the difference in properties. It confused and aggravated her; cognizant of what was happening but not *how*.

After an attempt to wrap her brain around the strange occurrence, she could only release an irritated sigh through her nose as no answer surfaced, submitting to defeat. Head tilted back, as it was left to observe the view above, she stole a glimpse downwards the water once more, somewhat hesitant.

The darker sections where the moon had no influence reminded her of Nothing. Brown eyes tore themselves away as a fluttering sensation commenced within her chest. What emotions were sparked by the unwelcomed reminder? Longing? Loneliness?

She shook her head. Enough of that. Time to move on.

While walking was by far a more complex movement compared to the few she had tested, lifting up one paw after the other eventually came naturally to her, and she carried herself away from the edge and further into the island. The disc platform was connected by a thin path to another section somewhat larger than the former. Her paw pads left prints in the sand as she traversed from one area to the other, willing herself not to look down as she watched the gold grains slip out from underneath her paws and over the lip of the extension. There was no way of telling if there was a splash.

Travelling to the other side exposed her paw pads to a new type of ground. It was soft and fibrous, a vibrant green in color, and cushioned each step as she walked. She welcomed the transition happily. The sand hadn't been harsh on her paws, no, but the new covering proved itself to be far more pleasant to the touch. It nearly reminded her of her own fur, but felt smoother, like a clear coating of... *something* had been plastered over each individual blade. It felt cool and soothing.

Fully on the other side, she came to a halt as her eyes met a tall, massive figure, something that had somehow evaded her attention until now. The fur along her spine bristled as a sense of intimidation washed over her, and she found herself unconsciously taking a few precautionary steps backward, her already plush tail looking twice its former size. Her upper lip curled as her face contorted into a snarl, eyes scrunched and claws bared. She held no former battle knowledge. There was nothing but the raw feeling of fight or flight, to *survive*.

Seeing as it didn't react, she stretched her maw to bare her teeth once more. Still... there was nothing. Odd. A few more visual warnings followed before her sense of intimidation began to wane. With careful steps and light foot falls, she took a gamble and approached the giant specimen, deciding to paw at its base. Whatever it was, its foundation seemed to be composed of many different limbs that reached out into the ground, occasionally poking up for air only to dive back under. The thought of them slithering underneath the surface and lurking just below her paws unsettled her. Nonetheless, her investigation brought her to the conclusion that this was not an able being. It wasn't like *her*. It was like the ground she walked on. A sudden comprehension. A *tree*. A thick and heavy trunk directed her eyes to a canopy many feet above her. Its size was an amazing feat, and it admittedly impressed her. She casted a timid glance to herself. Was her stature... even comparable?

Movement in the foliage above brought her to her senses. Eyes bolted upward to catch whatever was maneuvering through the vegetation. She squinted, straining to see through the gaps. There were plenty of them, the leaves were somewhat sparse... how was it dodging her sight? How was it so elusive?

Right when she was considering the possibility of invisibility, or more likely her own imagination at work, she caught a glimpse of something orange with minimal splashes of white gliding behind the greenery, equipped with a furry texture akin to her own. She watched it move in and out of sight, weaving through the leaves-- until it presented itself. Calmly and without hesitation, the creature emerged from cover, coming to rest on a gnarled branch.

It stared down at her through thin black slits, its wide amber eyes unblinking.

While its unmoving stare was disturbing, she tried her best to observe its features. It was rather fuzzy in appearance; plush and soft, save for certain areas. Its head was round, comparable in shape to the moon, and she could just spot the mounds of two curved ears poking through the top. Its face in contrast, however, was triangular and bare, revealing pinkish skin. Her eyes drifted down to its paws. They shared the same naked trait as its face, although were a strange and foreign shape. Unlike her own, they seemed to be composed of multiple segmented pieces, able to bend at those jointed areas. The claws were likewise different. They were much thicker than her own and were naturally hooked, curving into the bark it sat upon. Its long tail was nimbler, wrapped around the branch in a spiral, growing thinner towards the tip.

Hesitantly, she lifted her gaze back up to its face. Its eyes hadn't moved.

With a wary step, eyes never leaving the creature, she began making her way past the large tree. Its head slowly tilted to follow her movements, pupils dragging after her. She hastened her pace until she was on the other side of the tree, shielded from its view. A sigh of relief escaped her.

Looking ahead, she noticed there was little land left to explore before it dipped away into the watery abyss below. Was this all the new environment had to offer? As if an answer to her question had appeared, something stuck out to her in the corner of her eye, a contrast to the monotonous layers of green. Another object, like the tree, albeit much smaller than its formidable counterpart. Merlot flaps stretched out horizontally on either side, fanning a bundle of buds all packed closely together. Whisker-like tendrils drooped from its core, pale in color, intertwined with one another.

Odd. That wasn't surprising, *everything* she had so far encountered was odd-- but this plant specifically. It emitted a mysterious aura. Confusing like the tree's apparently useless design, and disquieting akin to the strange wide-eyed creature she had met moments ago.

That was it.

Frustration overpowered her. It finally bubbled out of her overflowing head. Everything was so strange and so unfamiliar. None of it made any sense. Face twisted in irritation, she took a swipe at the plant, her thin claws shredding the green stem it perched on. Its support destroyed, and without the ability to stand by itself, the flower collapsed to the ground.

Was everything going to be a struggle to figure out? Was nothing in this new life easy?

The question she dreaded returned to the front of her mind.



Was this new life *worth* the struggle?

Slouched besides the remnants of the plant, head bowed and shoulders slumped, she longed to return to the simplistic lifestyle back in Nothing. She was ready to return.

## Taste

A return to Nothing as I so desired, yet there is a new sense of longing embedded deep within me, its roots digging into my spirit and festering there, leaving me to yearn for something greater, something outside of Nothing's capabilities, a new sense to interrupt the numbness and stimulate my consciousness, and it comes, comes like a dream, a prayer answered, and I relish in it, foreign but welcomed, the intrusion a familiar routine, unceremonious yet standard protocol now, and I feel it rush over my tongue

and through my teeth, invasive, strange, new, takes all of my attention, my whole being surrounds it, focuses on it, I realize with a flare of excitement that it is Taste, and no longer fearful of these new additions to my being I explore it, try to understand it, and as I do so it begins its journey downward, scorching a trail down my throat and into my chest, plucking away at my body from the inside with invisible claws, digging through flesh and bone to search for something internal, something within me, but a something I cannot recall, and I consider the possibilities as Taste continues to tear away, what is it that it is hunting for, scavenging around my sternum in a forceful exploration before I feel something crumble and break free, and the rummaging presence finally finds what it is looking for, and a sense of relief washes over me as the digging comes to a halt and the pain ceases, replaced by whatever had been reclaimed being thrown back up into the tunnel of my throat, it does not burn, no unpleasant surface, and I am instead introduced to the details as it rests on my tongue, the intricacies of this newfound Taste, it is tangy and sweet, a flavor that I tend to savor, but they melt off my tongue and leave a bitterness, one that I cannot get rid of it, it lingers, it is "Something."

## Lullaby

*Erimeric*

A barely audible spontaneous scuttle,  
as spindly claws crawl across the floor.  
A lonely spine awaits their arrival,

lying in the dust to take form.

As spindly claws crawl across the floor,  
you watch them drag themselves along,  
leaving imprints in the inky muck.

A lonely spine awaits their arrival,  
their foundation and support,  
desperate to achieve greatness.

Lying in the dust to take form,  
the being is forever patient,  
but it will not be long now.