

Scent

Before it began, my world was void. There was no I. It wasn't an emptiness, there was nothing to be filled, nothing to comprehend or understand.

I couldn't tell you where it began.

Drifting between that void and something else, something more. It trickled in, a soothing warmth, barely present. Frictionless and indistinct, so hard to define. It drew me in.

Any passage of time was foreign to me, but at some successive moment, self-awareness dawned on me. Simultaneously, this sensation made itself known and I was distinct from the void. As drastic as the transition from nothing to something was, I knew nothing but it. My first reality, the simple fact that I was. The infant thoughts of my subconscious gathered to further evaluate this reality.

I embraced the presence and it lapped at me, growing with each imagined motion as it slowly filled my senses. I wouldn't quite describe it as sweet, but it felt soothing as it surrounded me. Or was it within me?

My sleeping mind struggled to decipher such a question. Half-unwilling to think at all.

There was no reason, no consequences, just me and the ever-present sensation. Regardless of my desire or lack thereof, the realization presented itself to my subconsciousness. The warmth was not distinct from me, it and I were one.

And with that, I developed a self-perception. It was new, but it felt right. Comfortable, nothing extraordinary. I swirled within myself, embracing an experience.

Oblivious to what about my existence might still be lacking, my mind continued to wander. This defining characteristic of myself, what was it really? Beyond my control, my curiosity became a torrent of thoughts, One after the other dancing around the truth and failing to hit the mark. They made me crave the calm world I had previously known. I willed myself to be patient and one finally struck true.

I could smell. The realization felt glaringly obvious. A wave of embarrassment washed over me, of course, my own scent. It was nothing but that, I should know it. I did.

The mental battle subsided and I once again was lulled by the smell. I consumed my scent and it grew more distinct. It was a grounding smell, a smell of safety. Not thick enough to choke on, but substantial enough to sate your appetite. It was a tool to establish that which was important. The aroma of my home. It was me.

Pulse

It jolts through you.

An unprecedented force disrupts your experience. Absent a moment to recover, another jolt. You're frightened by its unapologetic intensity, but it does not mind.

Again, again.

It's useless to brace against it, there is no escape. It begins at your very core and ripples through the entirety of your awareness. It's over so fast, then it repeats.

Again, again.

You can't wait this out, you realize. So intimately intertwined with you, but completely beyond your control. It demands your attention.

Again, again.

With each repetition, you feel as if you are swelling. Each quake distances you from your prior tranquility. You've never experienced such an unruly sensation before. It is powerful, you are empowered by it.

Again, again.

It never ceases, and you begin to forget that you ever lacked it. Such an inherent part of your being. It is your rhythm, your vigor, your pulse.

Fever

am i accustomed to it
steady steady
steady PULSING steady PULSING steady
An OFFENSIVE illusion
i knew what was missing from me
would contain me not
would restrain me not
nothing governed nothing
there was more to me
i carved myself from thE void
abandoning thE PEACEFUL nothing
i pursued my potential
i became entangled
stuck in A NARROW bottleneck
i struggled without it what will i become
my SUBCONSCIOUS uncertainty
thE tension of anticipation
grew HEAVY and suffocated me
i broke into A NEW dimension
and agony consumed me
A pain unprecedented
i writhed within myself
i gasped what went wrong
thE shock of sensation
burned me burned me
every instinct drove me away from it
SEARING cold and SCORCHING heat
neither relieved the other
will i survive this
thE FROZEN stiffness came from thE nothing
no longer hospitable

caught between two terrors
thE FIERY ache came from me
i am ablaze
unable to distance myself from thE nothing
unable to escape myself
A BLINDING pain
i was trapped in it
my THRUMMING pulse excited thE flames
justifying every fear of thE unknown
i was lost in An inferno
i felt or was i found
i was animated
A vortex of motion
i unraveled and was woven ANEW
something more born from thAt fire
i was ablaze with NEW potential
and A feverish desire
thE suffering subsided
i roiled
it curled and twisted
gathering or spreading
thE energy which tormented me was mine to command
its heat became NEW strength
i was present
how can i channel thIs strength
there was still more
i chased after thE more
nothingness A DISTANT memory

Flesh

Rising alongside heat, looking for more. Something else sifted through me, then attached. The feeling, quite distinct from prior sensations of temperature, but instead, pressure. As its grip tightened, discomfort turned to pain. Squeezing, pulling, ripping that formless essence into pieces. Once again overwhelmed by relentless agony which paralyzes, no, contains.

Torment ceases, allowing investigation. An authentic corporeal body. Warmth rode my pulse throughout, gathering on surfaces, exploring every tip. There is firmness, a defined beginning and end. I was filled with uncertainty towards whatever happening will take hold next. Only silence answers. Eventually, some calm fullness eases those anxieties. Settling within this whole new self.

Vision

There was warmth. There was warmth, her beginning, and her end. Where she ended, something else began. A coolness about her, a pressure beneath her. She was standing still.

Hints of light and muted color revealed themselves as her eyes fluttered open. Alarmingly, the ground under her paws shifted as she began to move. She adjusted her stance in the granular sand and looked up. Pale silhouettes of a landscape broke up the distant darkness. In the center of their contours, lights winked at her from a pool of darkness.

She wanted a closer look.

Atop a sandy hill, she found herself struggling to find good footing. The ground simply refused to stay still. Worse yet, it wormed its way between her toes and clung to her fur with every step. Finally, it evened out, and she noticed green tufts poking up here and there. Little plants, easily ignored, yet she felt inclined to investigate them.

They were bushy, with tiny round leaves. They had a mild... but not particularly appealing smell. She twitched her whiskers and continued towards the lights.

The plants began to cover more of the ground until she was walking more on them than on the sand. Taller stalks swayed charmingly in the breeze. They were white tipped with... flowers, yes. Four uniform little petals sprouting from a yellow center. How lovely.

Something moving, not too far away, caught her eye. She froze, watching cautiously. A creature poked out from a shallow spot amongst the white-flowered plants. It was jerking around, half circling something and kicking up lots of sand. She maintained her distance, apprehensive. It didn't strike her as particularly dangerous, only a little bigger than herself, with an odd appearance. Pointed, rock looking things covered its body and its tail was big, wider even than its head. She inched closer.

Ack! She recoiled as something flew up into her face. When she opened her eyes, she couldn't make out anything besides the plants. Unsure, she took

another careful step forward, flinching when she was pelted with another flurry of little objects.

Squinting with confusion, she swatted at one of the bushy plants before her. At the slightest contact, it erupted in a shower of sand. It didn't hurt, but it was certainly irritating. She wasn't sure what she had done to prompt the tiny assault, but she decided not to go any further into the field of hostile plants.

Observing from a distance, she realized the animal seemed distressed. It wasn't kicking up sand, but rather, it was victim to plant-projectiles at every twist and turn of its awkward body. It seemed to be circling around a point on the ground, perhaps its strange plates were stuck on something. Surely, it would leave the pesky plants if it could.

She tightened her lips at the odd animal's unfortunate fate, and turned away from the treacherous field. Resuming course towards the little lights, she made a point to avoid any more of the white-flowered menaces. The sand under her feet grew firmer and cooler to the touch. Her paws still sunk into it, just enough to leave a trail of little divets in her wake.

Before the lights, the ground gave way to that smooth darkness. She strode onto it, and her paw sunk right in! She quickly retracted her paw, sending up a flying string of droplets. Right... water.

Large circular forms broke up the periphery of the pond. The closest of these was not far from the water's edge a few paces to the side. She walked towards it, careful not to wet her paws again. It was large, very green, and looked solid. Leaning in, she pawed at it to confirm. It moved a little, but seemed sturdy overall. She bunched up her haunches and hopped onto it. It wasn't far, but her landing certainly lacked grace. She blamed it on the object's movement as she got her feet back under her.

Still unsure what it was, she assumed some sort of plant, considering the webbed green surface. It felt bewildering beneath her paws. While it certainly supported her weight, it shied away from each pawstep and exaggerated her slightest movement. It was enough to make her question how much she wanted to see the lights. But now, they were just ahead, a little further.

Looking about, more plants floated throughout the pond in clusters, some so close that one could easily move between them. If she focused less on the

ones right by her, she could almost start to see the plants forming paths across the water... A twinkle beside a distant one confirmed the route.

From plant to plant, she carefully jumped. A slight rim around each warded off the rippling water which threatened to overtake them. A moment's pause and the plant would still enough to make the next jump.

After some springy travel, she looked back up. She was no closer to the teasing shimmers! Looking back, she could tell she had progressed into the pond, so it must be the lights that were swimming away from her.

Her gaze followed them as far back as she could see. On either side of the lake, the land curved up. Straight ahead however was flat darkness, sprinkled with the lights until it bled up... up... up.

The lights rose far above her into the skies. An ocean of darkness and glimmering specks. Some areas lacked them, but rather than darkness there were swaths of... clouds. She sat back and stared up, realizing for the first time how vast the world hanging above her head was.

It was then, as she stared up at the sky, that the clouds parted to reveal the brightest light she'd ever seen. A marvelous spot of white, it pushed away all the tinier lights, demanding room for itself.

She tilted her head, not able to determine its size or distance. Much too high to jump to, for certain. A pointless attempt would only result in herself taking a watery plunge.

She ought to return to solid ground.

After considerable practice jumping from plant to plant and back, her feet found themselves back on the shore in a controlled manner.

Unwilling to pursue the lights into the distant water, she still couldn't help but regret never seeing them up close. Her spark of curiosity singed out and was replaced with frustration as she meandered beside the pond.

Movement ahead cut her train of thought and footsteps short. She fell flat against the ground. Up ahead, the forms of two animals bobbed about. They looked the same as the one from earlier. Without any irritating plants crowding the area ahead, she crept forward to investigate.

The two scaly animals tumbled and rolled jubilantly in the wet sand and shallow water. One looked a good bit smaller than the other, and neither seemed

aware of her presence. They looked so... happy. They were meant to be here, playing, thriving.

“Freedom.”

She realized she was frowning and the frown deepened. The other one was stuck in a maddening field of flowers. She needed to help it get back. It was meant to be free.

She would return to help it.

A cool sensation brushed against her foot. She hadn't moved, but the water came to her. It was easy to sidestep, but undoubtedly, it slowly encroached on the land. It lapped at her earlier footprints as she retraced her steps to the flower field. With a scrunched face, she pushed into them, enduring their gritty bursts. When she located the animal again, it had wrapped itself up in that wide tail. It was still, as were the flowers around it. She watched it closely as she approached, unsure what it might do. Its lack of reaction gave her confidence to begin her assessment.

Was it tired? Even the flowers around it were worn too ragged to bother spitting at her. She stiffly reached out her paw and tapped it on the side, immediately retracting the paw as her heart fluttered. It simply curled up tighter. Water poked up in between the bases of the plants not far off, occasionally prompting some to burst. She got the feeling that she didn't have long before it reached them.

Something poked out of the ground beside the animal. She crept closer to sniff it. A hard object without smell, it was unmoving in the ground despite the loose sand. Attached to it was a fibrous strand, running taut to the animal. She couldn't make out what was going on with it within the curled up body, so she assumed it had gotten caught on the scaly protrusions. Without its cooperation, she wasn't sure how to untangle it.

The water continued its approach, renewing her sense of urgency.

Something about the rocky animal and the pond did not mix well in her mind.

Pawing again at the animal to try and uncurl it, it frightened her with a sudden jerk. She leapt backwards, plant-sand shooting into the air as she collided with the ground. The pointed plates on its body suddenly looked much more menacing. They were sharp enough to cut her.

Sharp things could cut. A feeling ran through her body, down her arms to the tips of her claws. Keeping an eye on the animal, she turned on the rope, tearing into it.

"It's time." She felt her thoughts spill out her mouth.

Flooded water around it prompted it to finally uncurl. Free to leave, it scuffled away from her, deeper into the water. To her surprise, it didn't sink. The tattered end of the rope floating behind it, it began to swim away.

Cool water had pooled around her feet. Her gaze followed the animal as it swam further into the pond where more circular plants floated at the surface. She waded towards them, enduring the seeping cold for a few more paces until she was able to leap out of the pond onto the nearest one.

With a brisk shake, she rid herself of some of the clinging water. She inhaled the sweet air and released a sigh, grooming the chill from her fur. The animal faded away in the direction of the others, obscured, far off in the darkness.

She felt herself smile, satisfied with its fate.

Around her, the sweet smell grew stronger. A new pale object breached the water beside her. A flower, it was huge. Many layers of thin petals folded over each other in a rounded, soft shape. As she looked around between the other circles, near and far, other white flowers had appeared. Perhaps the distant white flecks were flowers, dotting the horizon, scattered through the sky.

There was more she hadn't seen, more to do, more to explore... but nothing else compelled her to action. She might stay a while, adrift in the glittering darkness.

"Let's take our time." She sighed to herself, content. "It's the only freedom we have."

Taste

A feeling of satisfaction, serene, the drifting notion of sweetness, a sweet smell, my smell, intertwined, imagined, a new sensation conjured up, a thickness filling my snout, the dream growing alarmingly potent until I realize it is not a dream it is not me it is not sweet it is not comfortable and as I tense against it, it scrapes between my teeth and burns against my tongue and down my throat and as it is within me I feel it, I know it, the edges of my mind prickling with anticipation as it builds up in my vulnerable core, anticipation, of bad, maybe, but it could be, it might be, I consider, curious against instinct, this stirring feeling of excitement, I want to know, I need to know, I can feel myself salivate, the new taste gave me some craving, a desire for clarity, a burst, a fluttering within me, snared by the other, I wanted it back and I could feel it withdrawing with this torn off, this fragment of me, a fragment I needed to be whole, don't take it from me, I need it and it is rising up through my throat and I try to tense and I try to clench my teeth and keep it in but my body feels distant, frustratingly relaxed and oblivious to my fear and my commands, unrestrained, it passes through my jaws, leaving me, it left me, but, I am still with me, I am still whole, delivered to my tongue, I can taste it and I recognize it, Orli, a taste of clarity, a taste of identity, a taste of individuality, it settles in my mouth and floods my senses, satiating my hunger, my need to know, I am full and I savor it, relish in it, grateful for its release, relieved, relaxed and a tinge amused at my own fear, that this could ever be stolen from me, that I could ever be, that I ever was, anything but myself.

Lullaby

Trimeric

There shines a little light called Orli,
a phantom of a soul.
Afloat in a boundless sea of stars,
you search for what is yours.
A phantom of a soul,
skirting dreadful visibility,
existing, complacent, blissfully.
Afloat in a boundless sea of stars,
frightened by the roar of crashing waves.
Diligence keeps you safe.
You search for what is yours
tucked between the frigid and the flames,
a promise of order you proclaim.