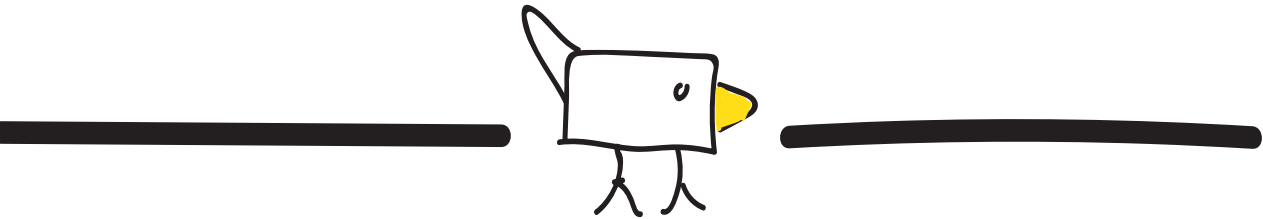


stillness allows



the joy of everyday beauty

**SNUBSTA**

snubsta.com

## what readers say

Your ability to see the beauty in the ordinary is 'extra'ordinary.

I am rarely speechless. Your pictures and writing leave me speechless.  
I want to hang your pictures around my room.

What a fabulous end to a pretty all-round good day.

You have coaxed the mundane out into the heroic light.

Everything you write has truth and beauty in it.

What I love about your work is the simplicity of it. How you condense  
the mood into so few, and perfectly chosen, words.  
I always feel like I'm right there with you.

Thank you for such a smile at the end of a long day.

These words were the therapy I needed.

Snubsta is making a difference in my life.

You continue to astonish me with how your drawings and words  
interact and create such a larger impact than the one  
without the other might—really dig your work.

Each time I read your writing it makes me want to go outside,  
and notice.

How did you know this is just what I need to get through this day?

I think I finally took a deep peaceful breath for the first time in days.  
Thank you.

I needed to hear this today.

I love starting my day with you.

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for Bram

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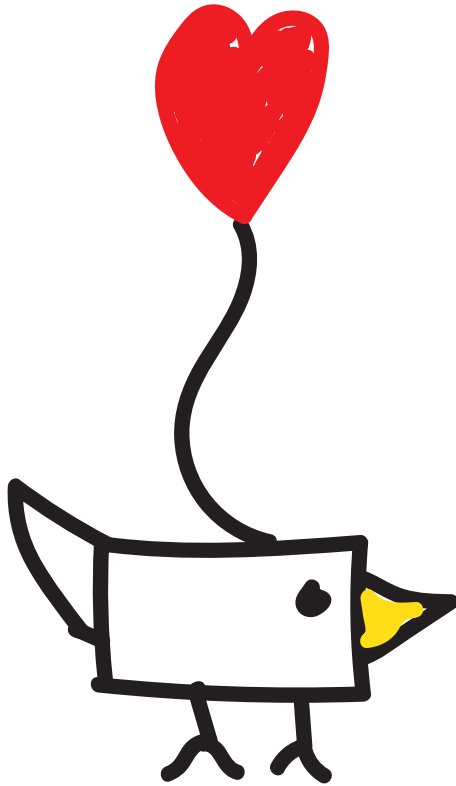
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# Delight

At the start of autumn,  
when the leaves are falling,  
a bird flutters upwards.

Such a curious joy.



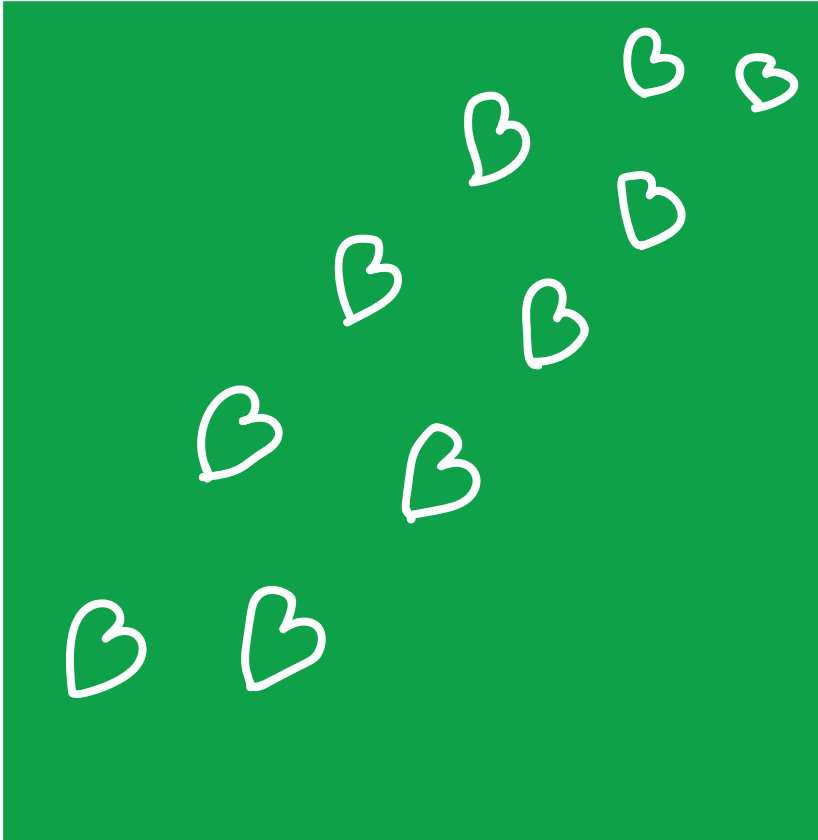


## please walk on the grass

Sometimes, when the day's been long  
and my shoulders are tight, I'll take a step to the left  
and walk on the soft grass or loamy floor.

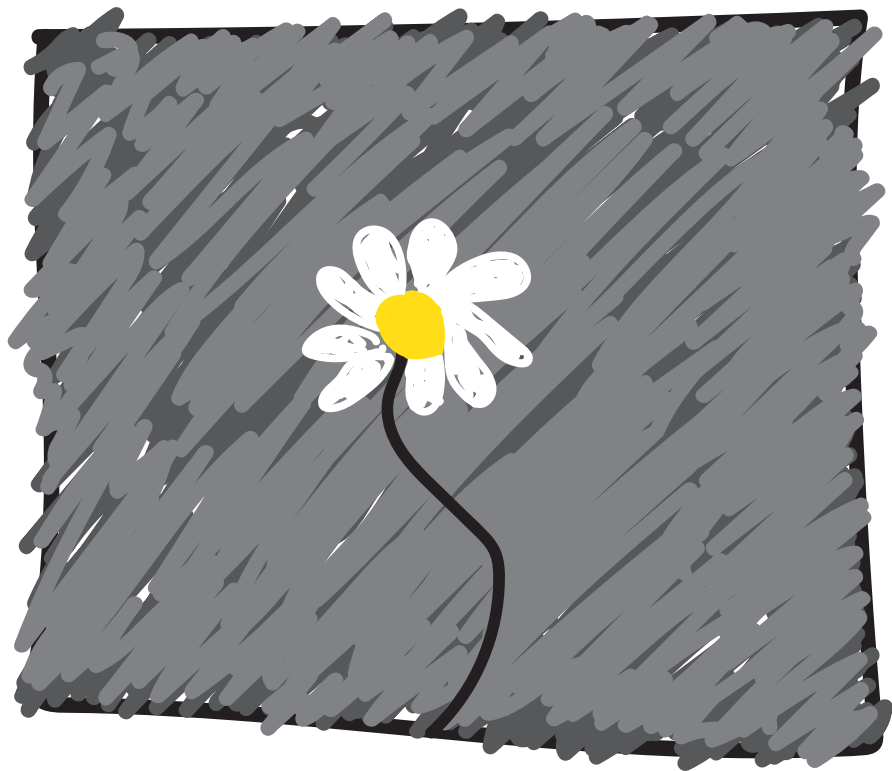
I'll pass over coggly stones and snappy twigs,  
surprise dips and shifty inclines,  
and sniff hay and fungus and leaf.

The ground, a cushion for my heart,  
says tread on me please so I can love you back.



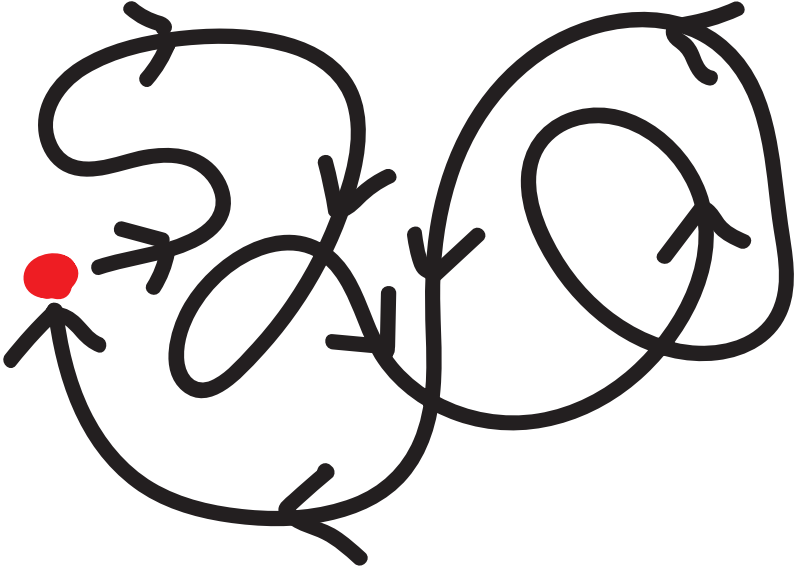
## *A New Daisy*

On the kind of October day  
when the leaves are brownly matted,  
the clouds three miles heavy,  
and the wind sears a knifey bite;  
when winter seems tomorrow  
and darkness rushes early—  
a new daisy appears.



# Here

Sometimes  
the easiest way to get to the place I need to be  
is by sitting still.



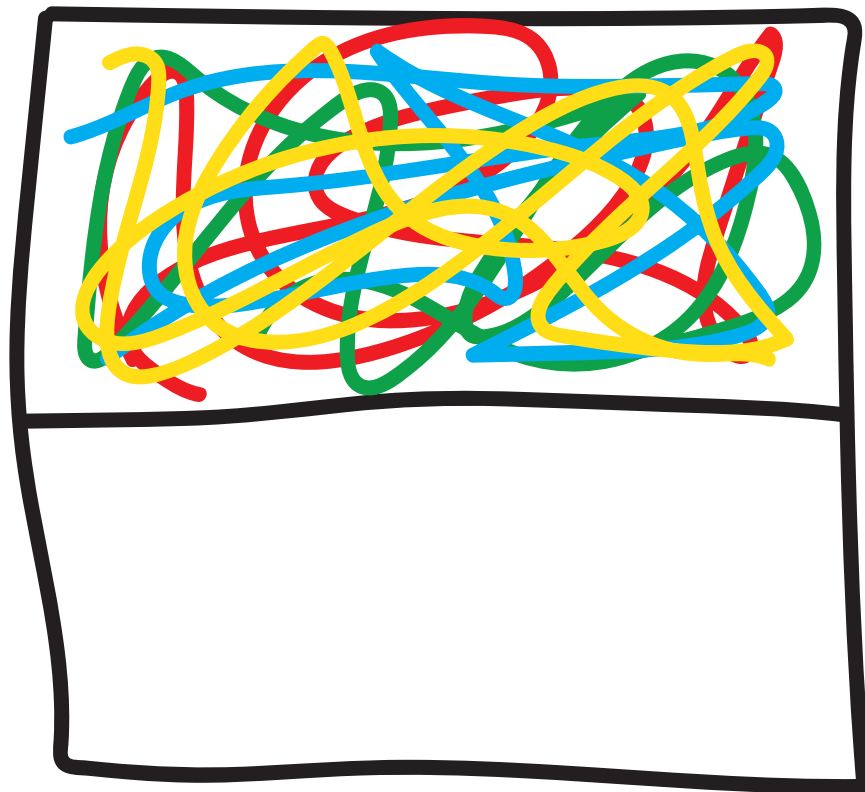
## Let Me Drop Into My Quiet Place

Let me drop into my quiet place,  
that deep safe of emptiness  
and everythingness; that warm space  
of home, where all's OK  
and what's not OK  
is not important.

Let the rest of the world, with its heat  
and its static, its parties and its stories,  
go about its babbling.

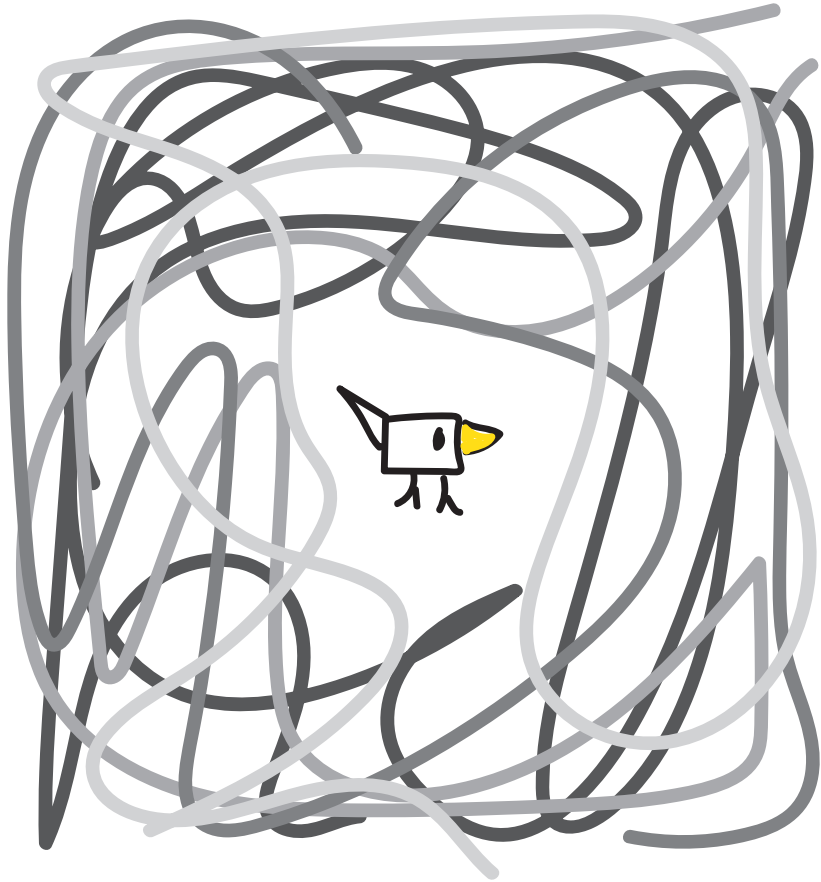
It doesn't matter much.





## The Feathered Things and the Leafy Things

When the big things and the terrible things  
get too heavy, I take a step outside,  
stand still and allow the small things  
—the feathered things and the leafy things—  
and know that OKness is always there.



## Everyday Sunsets

A fresh leaf in fall,  
the chipmunk with hiccups,  
a soft mossy forest,  
some quartz in a stone.

A new blue flower,  
the breeze in the branches,  
that cheep from the sparrow,  
a far wisp of mist.

They're everyday sunsets—  
all of them.



# What the Body Says

Whenever there's a tinge of upsetness or not-rightness,  
I like to ask my body:

Hi, body, what's up? Is there anything going on you'd like to tell me?

And my body would say:

You know what? I'm feeling a little fluttery in the gut or my shoulders are tight.

And so I'd sit and let my body send its signals,

like the first touch of toaster burnt

or chilled breeze from the north.

There are other times, though,  
when I won't let my body speak  
and my mind insists:

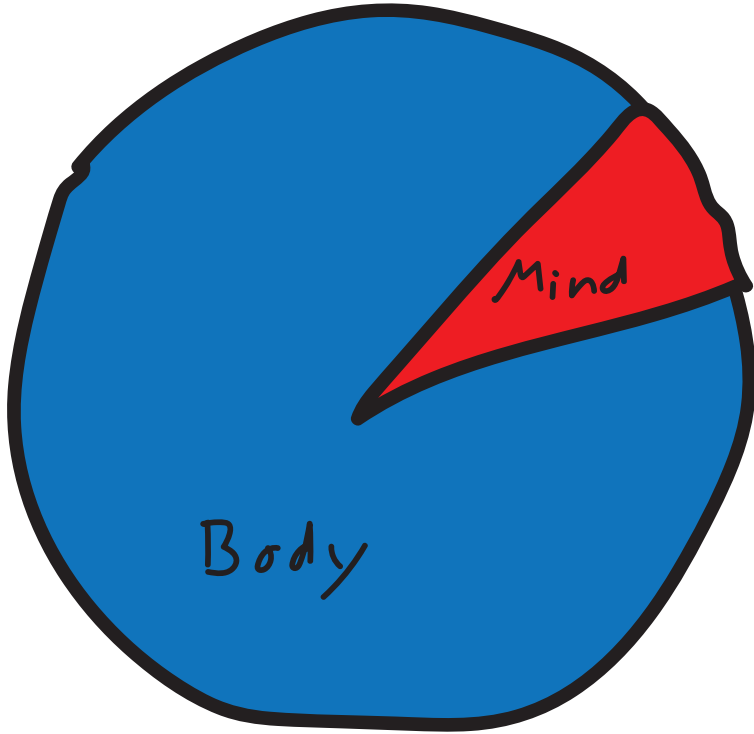
I know what's going on,

I'm in control,

I know what's right and I don't want to hear otherwise.

Let's power on up and keep on going because you've got goals to reach and  
places to be.

And then the toast burns and it starts to rain regret.



The great pie of wisdom

Eh?

Why do we think  
we must rush  
to answers?

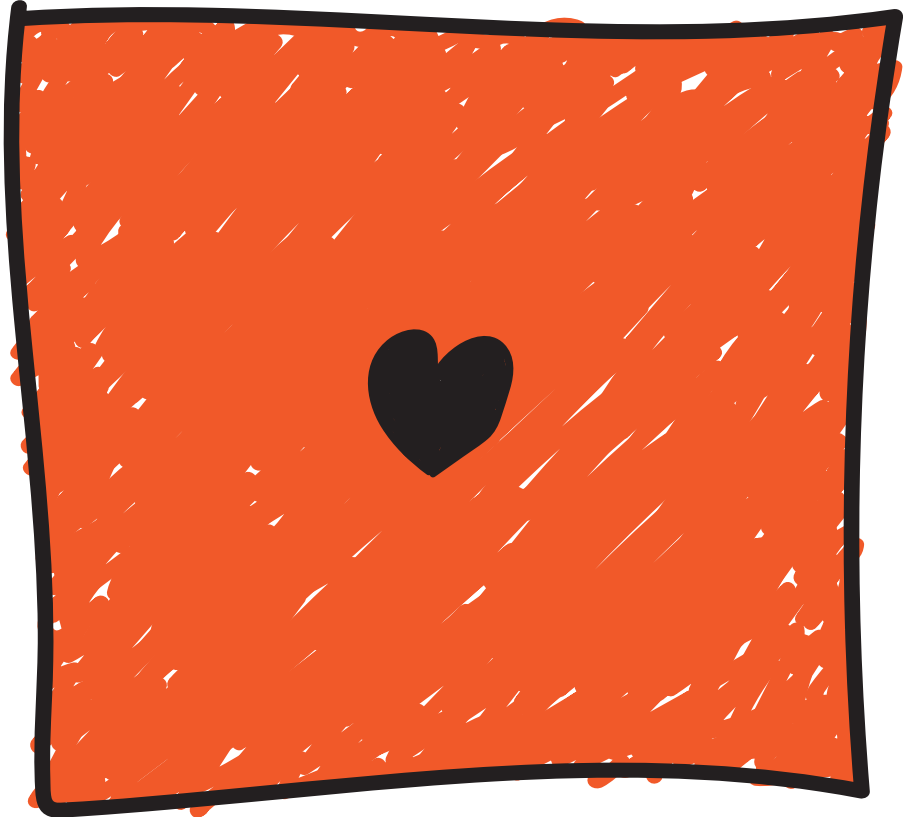
Aren't questions enough?





# Delicious

It's curious how autumn can smell  
delicious, warmly loamy, earthy, cozy.  
The crispy leaves trap the heat,  
the nourishing nuts in woodchuck's nest.  
There's bark and twigs, seeds and thorns.  
It's gorgeous, nutritious, scrumptious,  
death.



# Bark

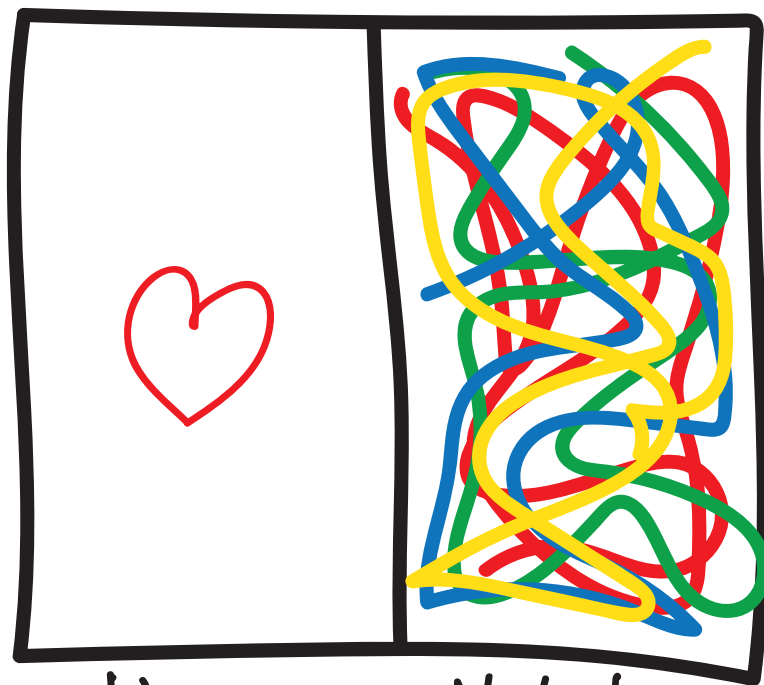
Sometimes when I want to  
get out of my head I reach  
for a beer and other times  
I visit a tree and notice its  
thirteen shades of brown and its  
Appalachian bark, I see its wounds  
and its peels, its twisty bits  
and its shiny bits, I find a life lived  
in the hot years and the cold years,  
the gales, the storms, the droughts.

And I forget myself.



# The Cup

Every time I'm here  
but not here, I miss  
the shine on the  
hard, white, clean porcelain cup.



Here

Not here

# Monday

Will this Monday be the day  
I learn to sweep the world's  
fallen leaves; when Post-its and dollars  
can be brushed aside to reveal  
the sweet ground of life?

Will this be the day  
I remember there's always  
soft earth beneath my feet?

Can I be with Monday by uncovering the weekend?





# That Moment

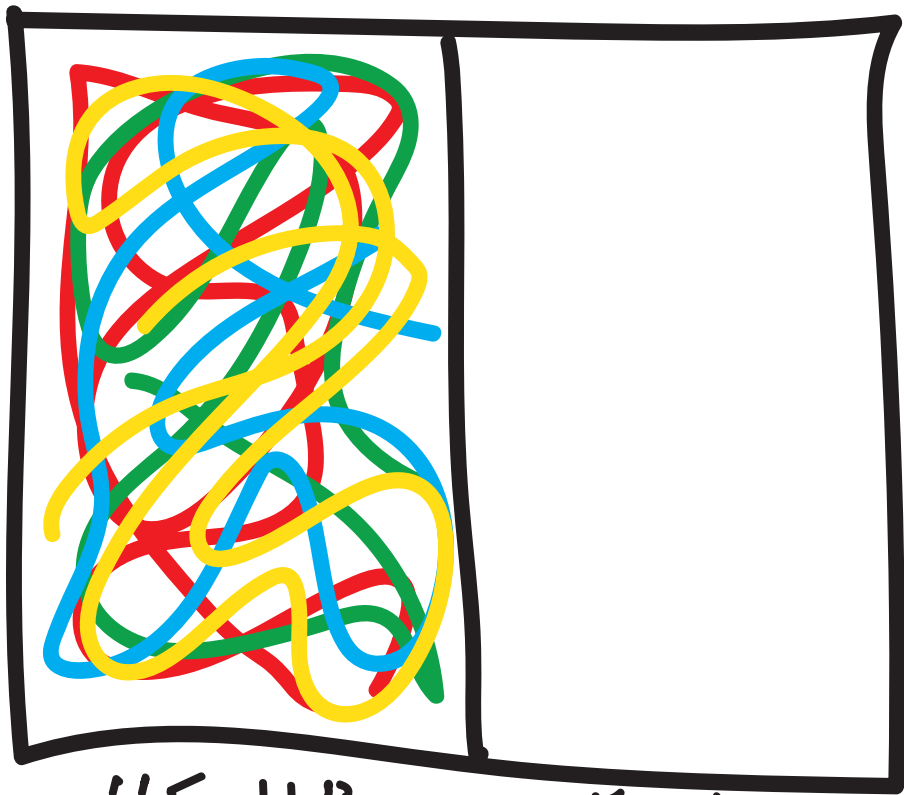
That moment,  
as I approach an open window  
and get my first scent of the outside air.  
That moment...  
that moment is life.



# Fullness

How curious, says he one day  
while sitting on the couch,  
how life can be full in the head  
with its to-dos and its bills,  
its difficult conversations  
and its 2pm dates. And yet, says he  
while lying on that couch,  
how down in the chest  
it can be empty and spacious,  
a chamber for love.

How curious, says he,  
while standing up,  
that what seems empty  
is also complete with fullness.



"Full"

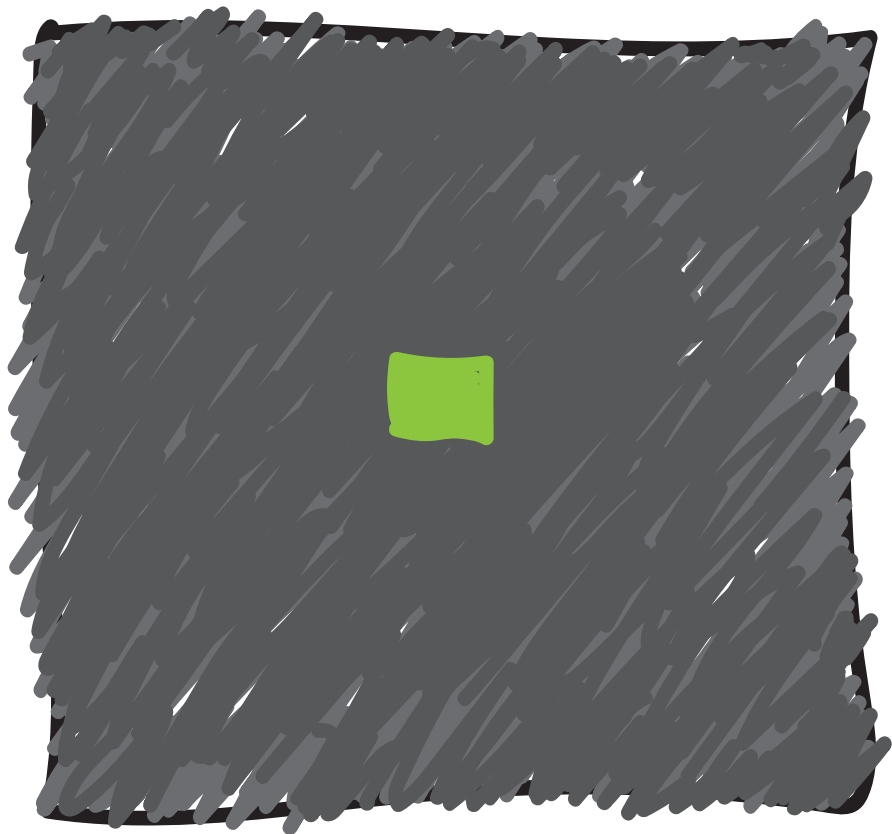
Full

# Lime

The kitchen smells of lime  
this morning—a zesty Hi!  
from the night before.

Outside is fog,  
inside is Florida.

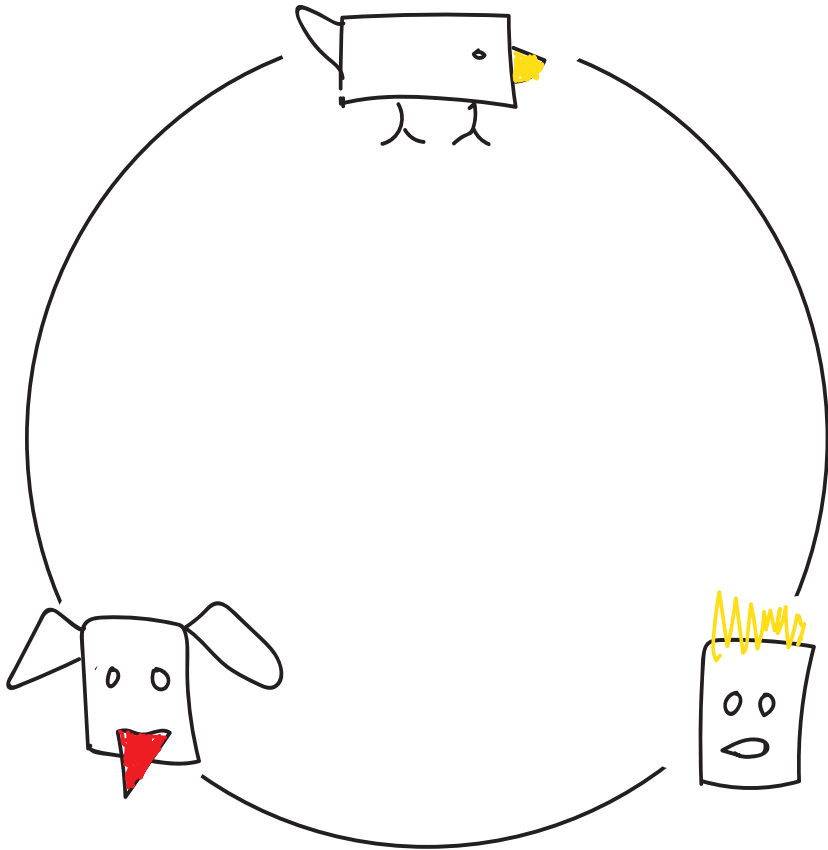
Like a kick of joy in a groggy dream.



# Wildlife

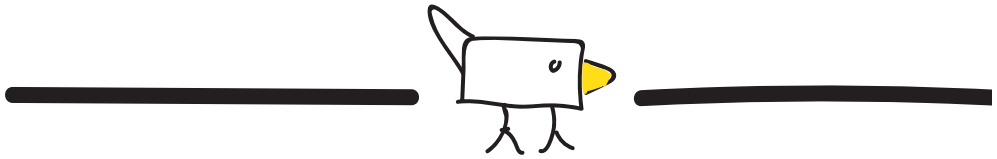
I wonder if we  
—as humans—  
would feel better  
stripping off the Lululemons,  
unpopping the AirPods,  
stepping out of the Lexus  
and remembering that we  
—too—  
are wildlife.





## Stillness Allows

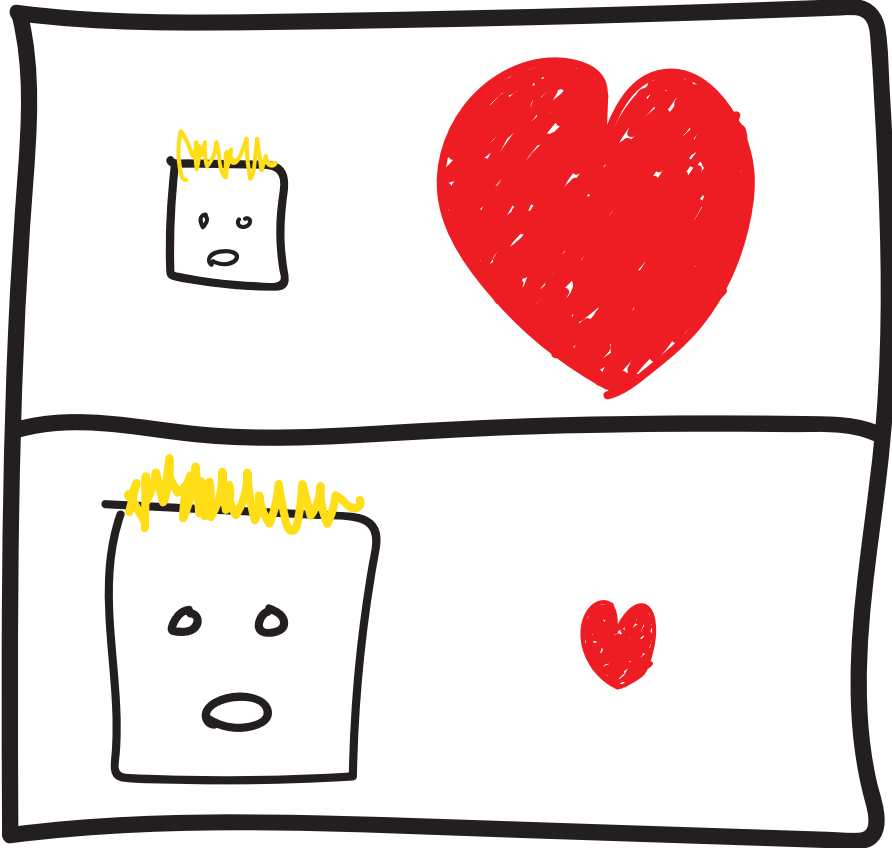
Perhaps it's only when we stop and be still  
that the world begins. Only when we cease  
and rest do we see the paper-white moth,  
the shiny droplets on the leaf, the bird  
that drums on the hemlock trunk. Only then  
do we taste the air and notice the wind,  
glimpse the sun shafting through the cloud.  
Perhaps it's only when we're still and at rest  
that we allow the world to enter us.  
And us the world.



## Growing Down

When we're five,  
we're in love  
with fungus  
and berries  
and mud.

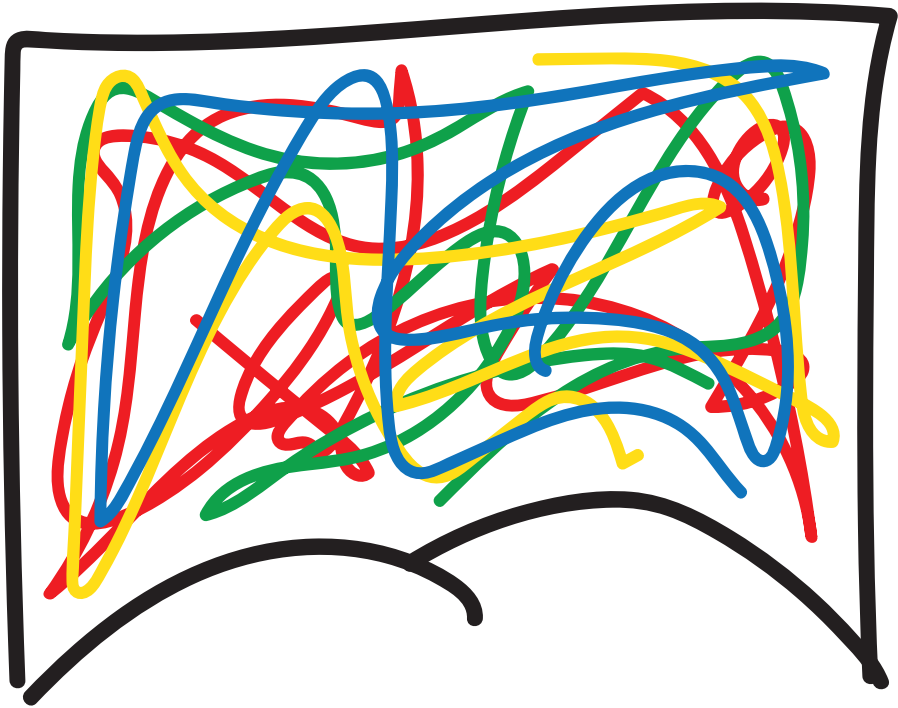
Then we grow up,  
buy a house  
and wonder  
what's missing.



# The Osprey

One Monday morning, my head was heavy  
as I stressed the to-dos and the emails,  
Covid and CNN. My shoulders were tense  
and my jaw was clenched. I'd downed  
two coffees and needed three more.

And then a bright white osprey ghosted past the window  
with a fish in its talons.

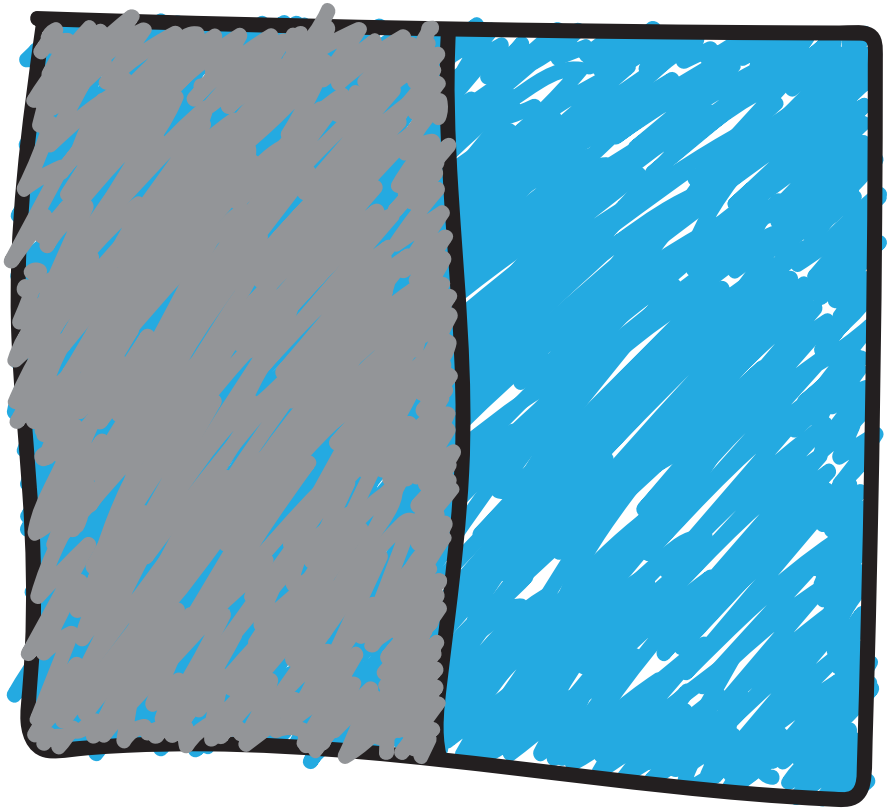


# Mind Dust

There are minutes when I'm bored  
and my brain and my fingers don't know  
what to do, so I scroll through Twitter  
or Facebook or the New York Times,  
allowing each new post to settle  
on my mind, one by one like motes  
of silver dust, until I'm blanketed  
by dirt and detritus  
and crud.

Through the window, meanwhile,  
the sky is clear and the birch  
are shimmering in the breeze.





## Where It Happens

In my head, there's a full executive suite,  
with a CEO, CFO and a director of operations,  
who gets hot and busy with all the operations  
he has to direct.

Then, down in my chest,  
is a silent sanctuary.

It gets ignored  
but the truth is—

It's where the real work gets done.



♥  
Hey!

## Ceci N'est Pas Substa

Where do we put the things  
that don't have names, which cannot start  
with A or Z, or sit on this shelf  
or in this bin? How do we think  
about the feelings we know  
but won't describe; when words  
are faint and point askew?  
How can we talk about truths  
we can only sense?  
Is silence perhaps  
the only sound we have?



Ceci n'est pas Snubsta.

## Rain, Forest

Have you noticed,  
when the rain is barreling down  
in the forest, it sounds like  
the trees are applauding?



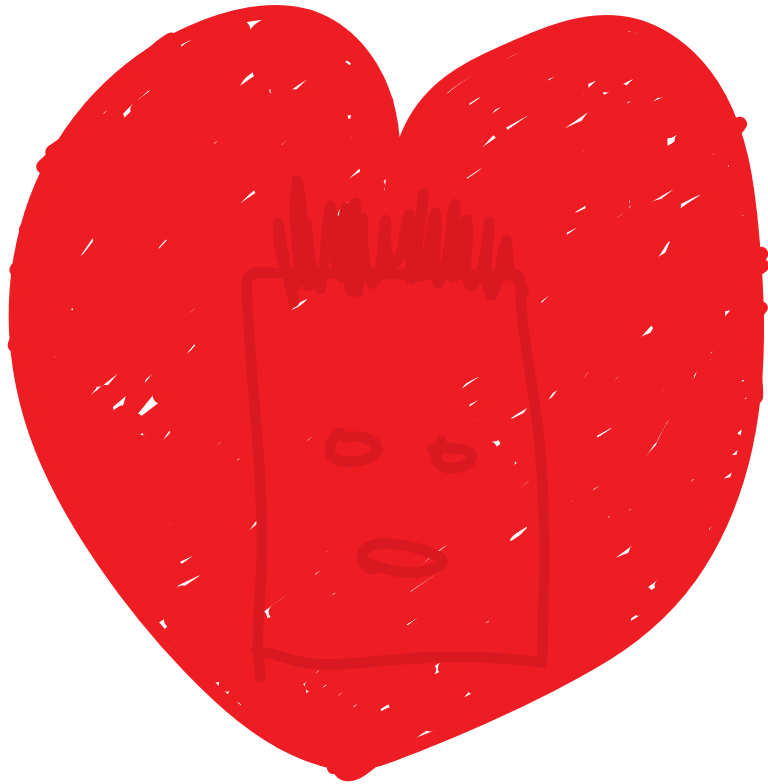
## Saturated With the World

What is it to breathe in the world  
and let the lungs fill  
with damp leaves, sandy dunes, rot?

Can we sense the pine, the hay,  
feel the stream, touch the rock?

Will we let the world permeate and saturate,  
so we know—at last—it's where we belong?





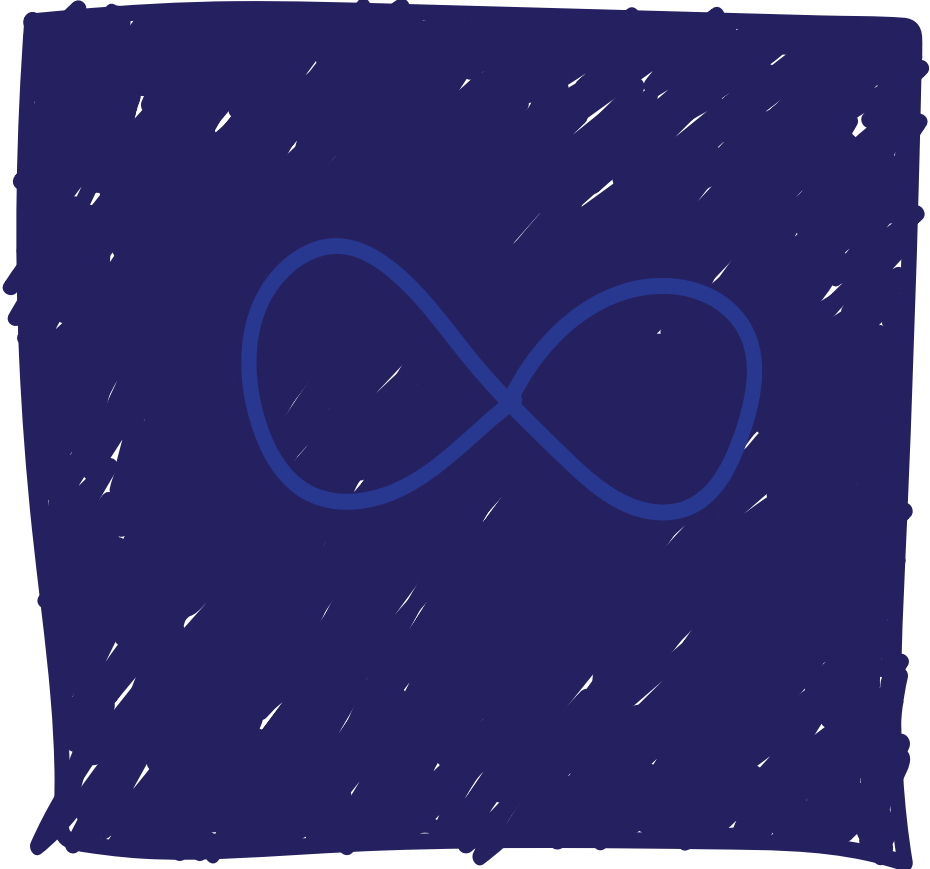
# Infinity Pool

What do we do when there are no right answers?  
When things are complicated, inexplicable,  
uncertain?

Where do we send our desperate, hunting minds  
that are famished to know?

Do we make up an answer, a story?  
A belief?

Or can we dive into the deep, blue pool  
of unknowing,  
throw our heads back  
and float?



## A Little Box of OKness

Somewhere deep inside the chest, perhaps  
between the lungs and certainly behind  
the jailhouse ribs, is a little box of OKness.

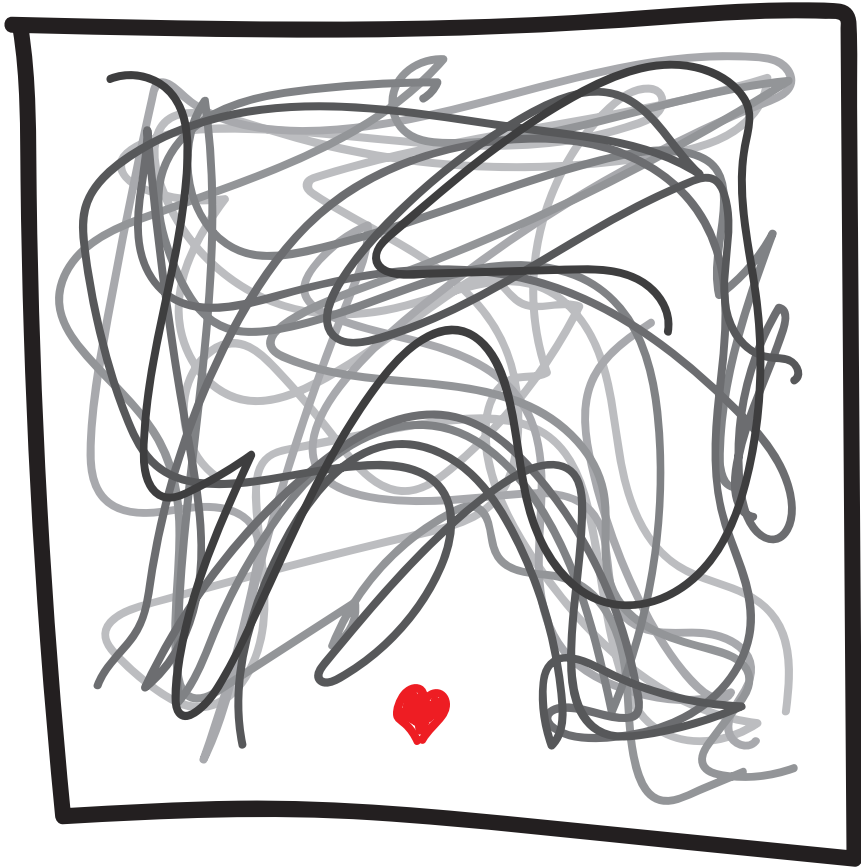
We were born with this box  
and we will die with this box, but for  
most of our lives we forget it's there.  
Instead, we occupy ourselves with our  
day-to-day. We launch careers  
and start families, we cook dinners  
and watch movies. There's pleasure  
and there's sadness.

And most of all, there's fear  
and there's regret.

Sometimes, when we climb a mountain  
or make love, we remember  
the little box, and we say:  
I'm joyful, I'm at home, I'm OK  
with everything that is  
and everything that happens.

We desire that OKness to last forever  
but then we get distracted  
and think about pensions  
and spaghetti and cellphones  
and beer.

Isn't it odd? We have this little box  
of OKness inside us,  
yet we seldom know it's there.

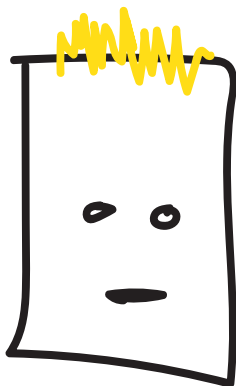


# Knowing Nothing and Everything

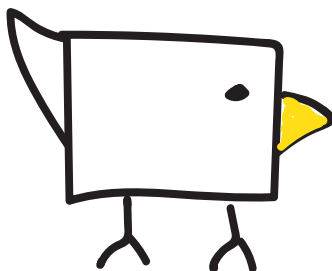
Can we, just for a moment,  
arrest the desire to name and claim,  
to identify  
and investigate?

Can we stop the whens, the whats, the hows,  
and the becausees?

Can we instead sink into the not-knowing,  
the nothing and the everything,  
and allow its beauty  
to saturate us?



I am



It is

# Just Static

Have you ever wondered—he says one Thursday night—  
whether most of what we call life  
is—actually—  
just static?

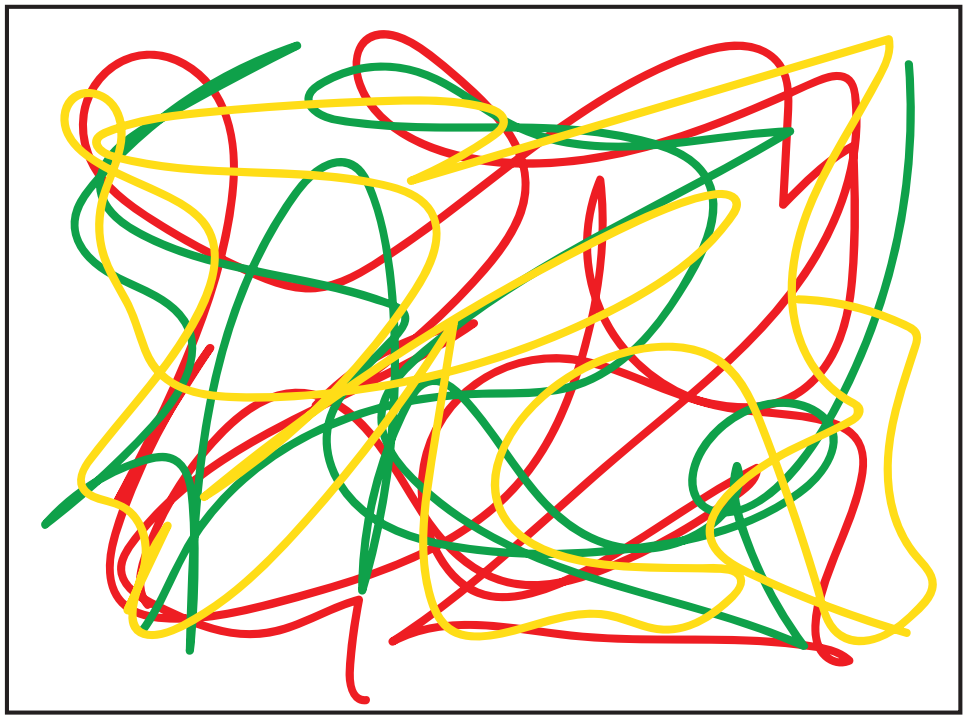
Is day-to-day reality the popcorn at the movie  
or the back-of-class giggling?

Is it the squeak in the trunk  
or the clicking of the fridge?

Is it possible the news and the socials  
and the jobs and the Dows  
are the smears on the windows  
or the half-time ads?

Have you ever considered  
whether—most of it—  
could be put in a box  
and abandoned  
while we step outside,  
stand still  
and allow the wind  
to touch us?

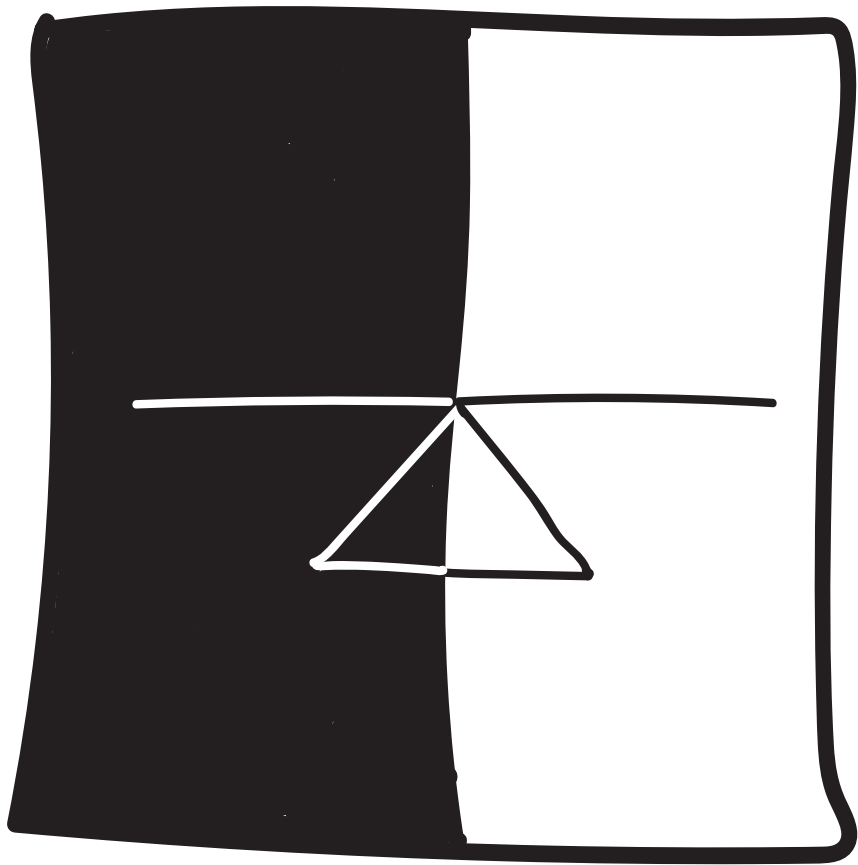




## Equinox Twilight

At equinox twilight the world hangs,  
half day, half night,  
while the wind holds its breath  
and only the squirrels cheekily dare  
laugh at tomorrow.

Because they made plans.



## The Sky

When the sky's as blue as it is today,  
I want to dive into it and swim,  
to lose myself in its clearness and pureness.

Until I realize it's the thinnest of stripes,  
and beyond, there's blackness and airlessness and gamma rays  
that would zap me.

So I stay down here and make a cup of tea.



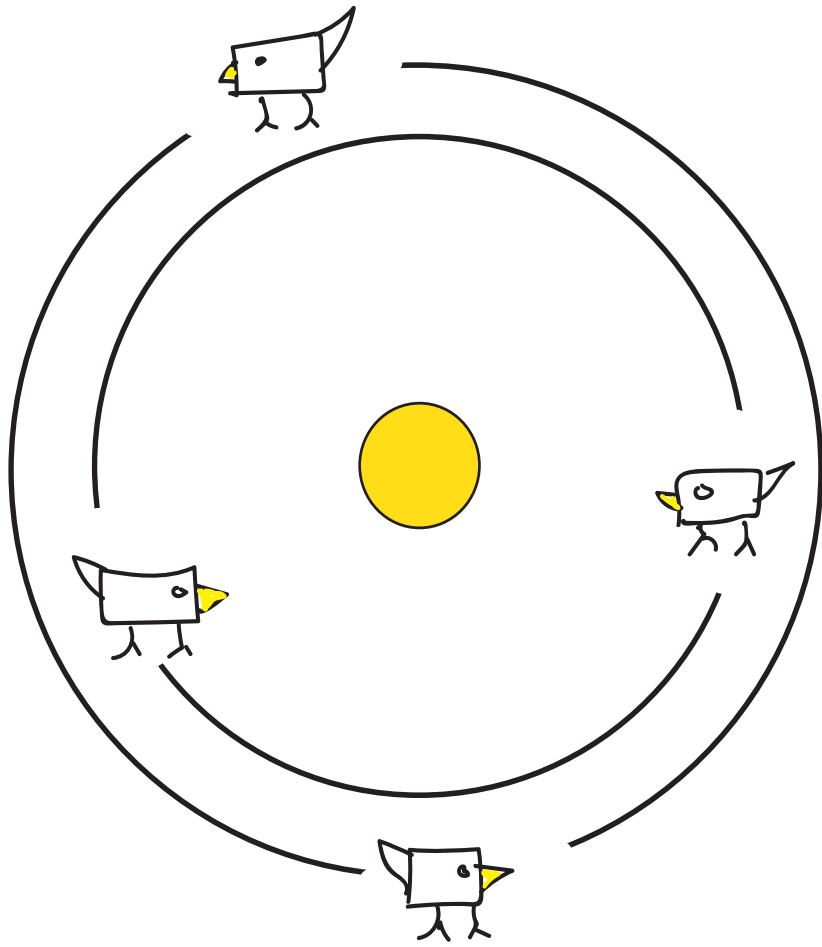
## The World Turns

Those loons, which must know  
their warm water will shortly freeze.  
Do they worry? Or do they just fly?

The monarchs, so tissue-flimsy  
and buffeted by the wind,  
they have an odyssey ahead.  
But are they afraid?

And the woodchuck,  
hungry all summer  
for a winter at rest.  
Does it care how the snow will pile?

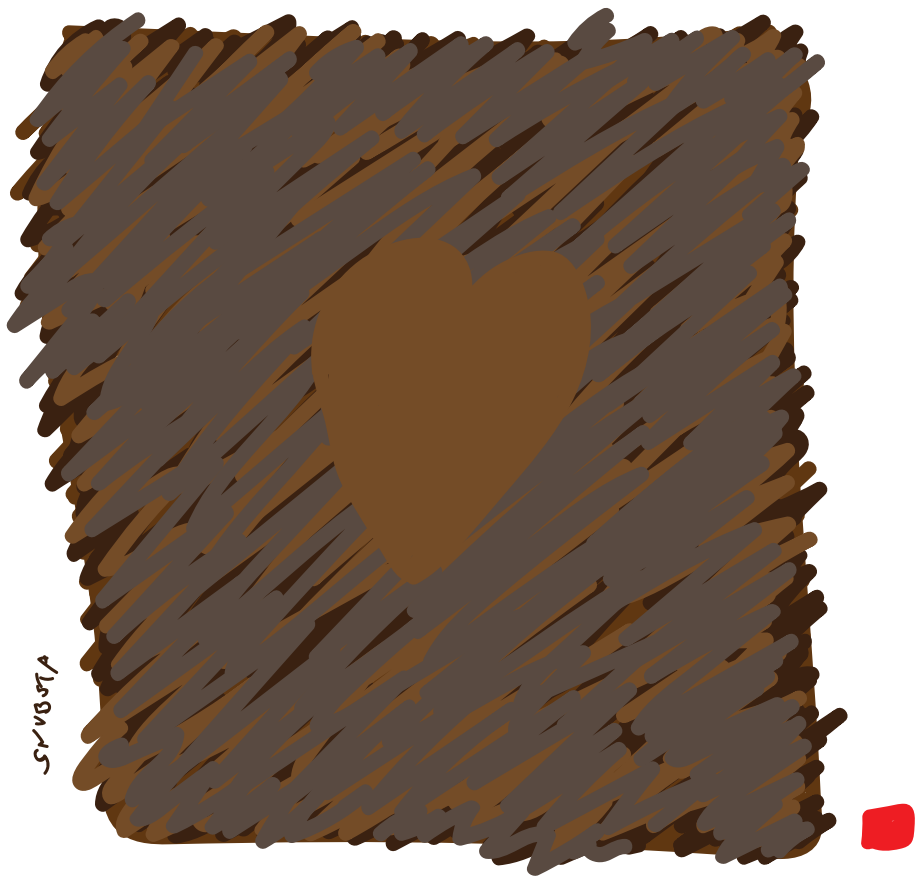
The world turns and they turn with it.



## Shades of Brown

Can I sink in  
to the shades of brown,  
the mushroom, bark, earth?  
Let me inhale  
the mud, the chestnut horse.  
Shades of brown so nourishing,  
I will let red alone.





SMV8.7A

# The Small Things

Today is a day for the small things.

The sparrow, which so bravely sang,  
is now half-bird,  
half-leaf,  
shyly rustling the raspberry,  
while a bee nuzzling the ragweed  
thirstily races the setting sun  
and a brave, blue flower  
this morning dares bloom  
—frost tonight.

Today is a day to notice the small things  
and know they—too—  
are part of the big everything.

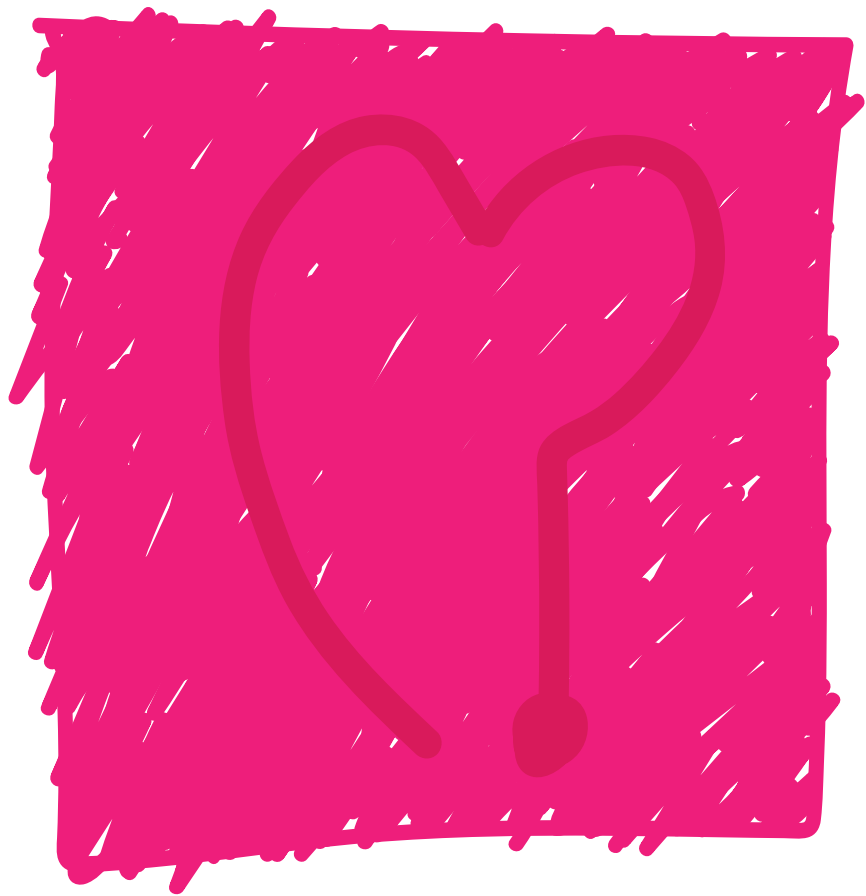


# Attached

The woodchuck, which one day sniffed my shoe  
before waddling to seek more clover,  
is gone.

Like the summer that closed when the chill came  
and the frost threatened,  
it departed too soon.

Was I wrong to love something that could leave so easily?



## Delicious Decay

Amid the blackened thistles,  
the frayed leaves,  
the stealthy fungus  
and the last white daisies.

Amid the crow's squawk,  
the osprey's peep  
and the maple's creak.

Amid the dusty bark  
and the rotting log.

There is the scent of decay.

And then a mouse flits across the road.  
Like a living ghost.



## Back in Love

I challenge you to go outside  
and feel the sun and smell the air  
and hear the crickets and see the daisy...  
and not fall back in love with the world you're part of.





## Rain Shower

There's that moment, at the edge of a cloud, when the rain considers.

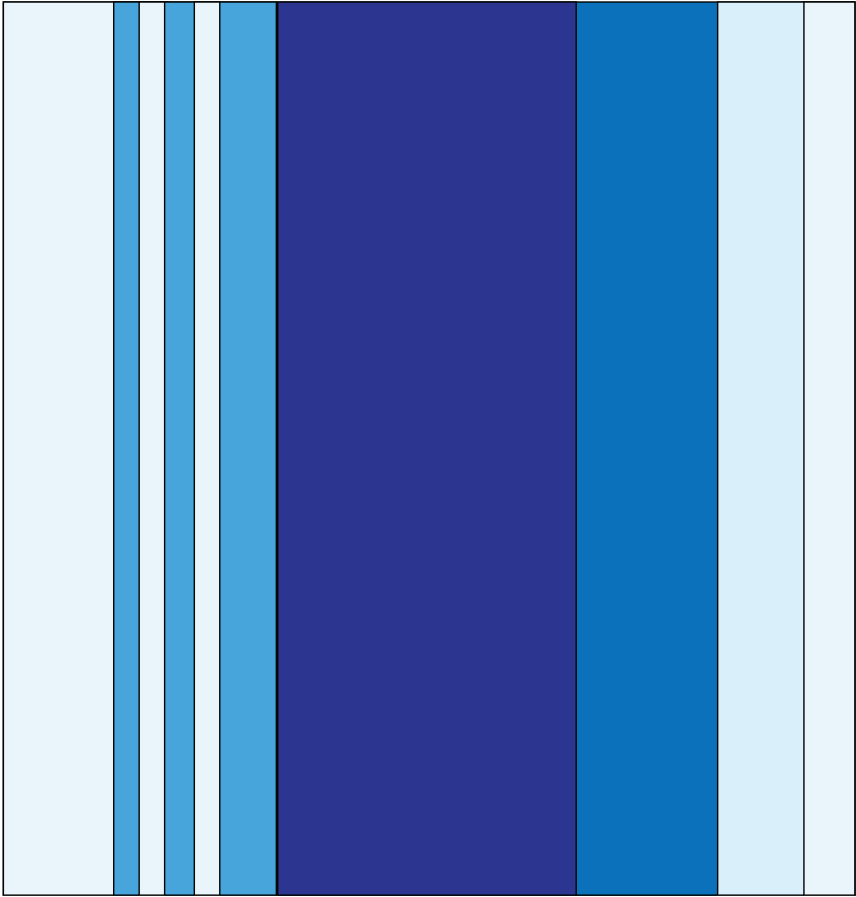
A splatter of drops, then none, then a splatter more.

Until the cloud says, let's be done with it, let's let loose, here we go.

And the rain barrels down, unconstrained, because to hell with it.

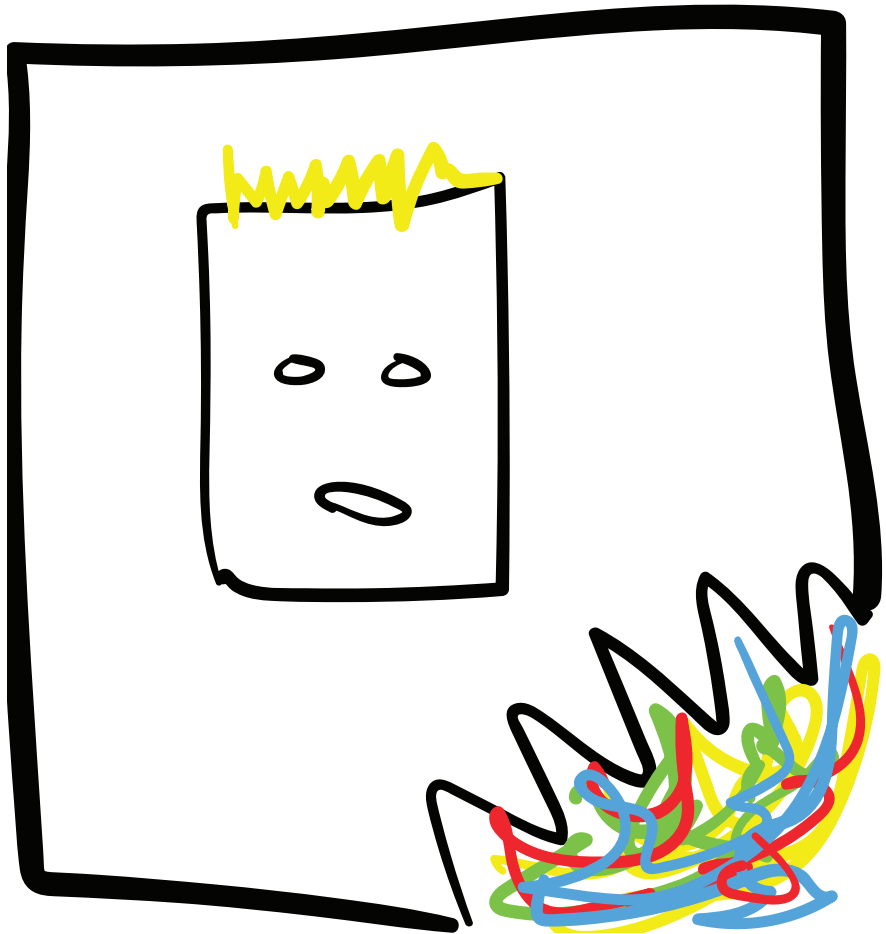
Until, relaxed, the cloud moves on with an end-of-party fade, and the Earth exhales.

It's not rain. It's a play in three acts.



# Intrusions

Sometimes I can be still and breathe,  
and steep in the mellow soup of OKness,  
where I know that nothing can harm me  
and that all is well and all is good.  
And then I remember I've got to pay the Visa bill.



# When Words Can't

I know that  $2 + 2 = 4$  and it's  $\pi r^2$  for something else.  
And if I drive 60 mph for half an hour, I'll be 30 miles away.

This tree is made of atoms,  
which are made of protons and neutrons and electrons,  
which are made of smaller particles like a quark,  
or another thing, teeny and strangely named.

I know I'm sitting on a couch, eating popcorn and there's a stain on my hoodie  
from lunch.

My name is Snubsta, because that's what they say I'm called.

But what of the other things? The not-things? The knowings?

How do we accommodate the deliciousness that arises when words... can't?

66



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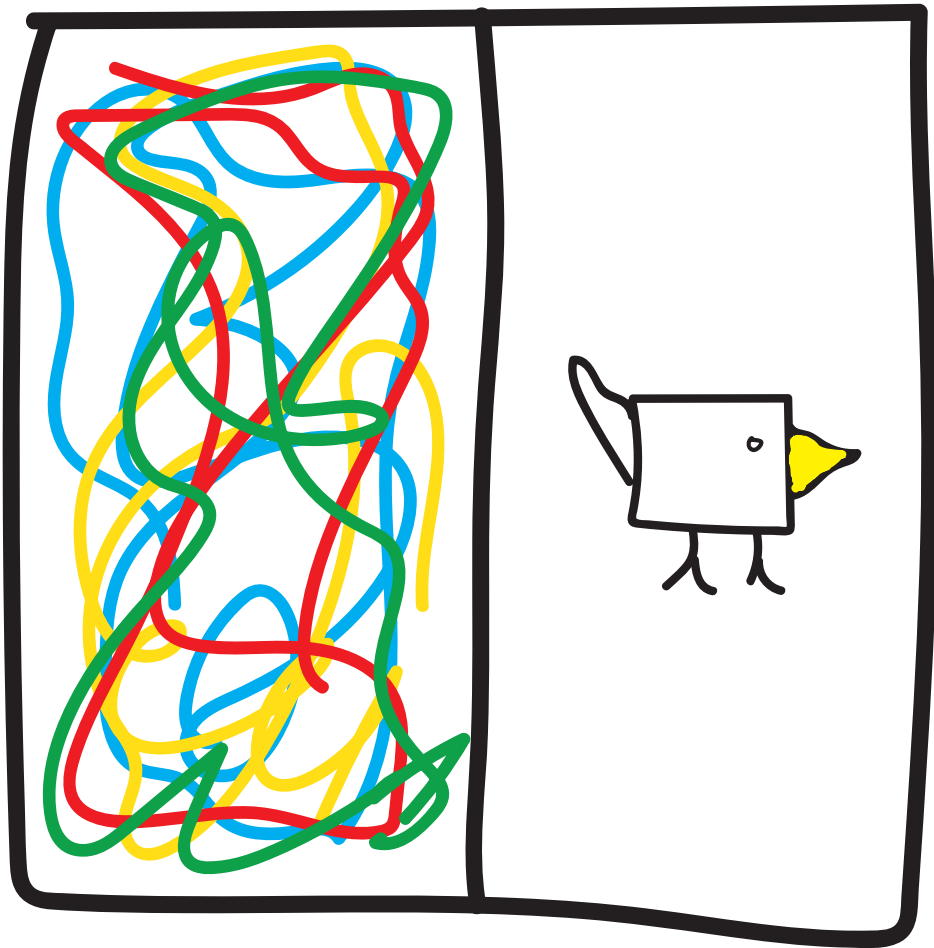
## OK Bird

Sometimes I find my heart racing and my breath short as I twist on yesterday's problems and tomorrow's to-dos.

Then I notice a chickadee on the tree outside.

It's so light and fluffy and OK.

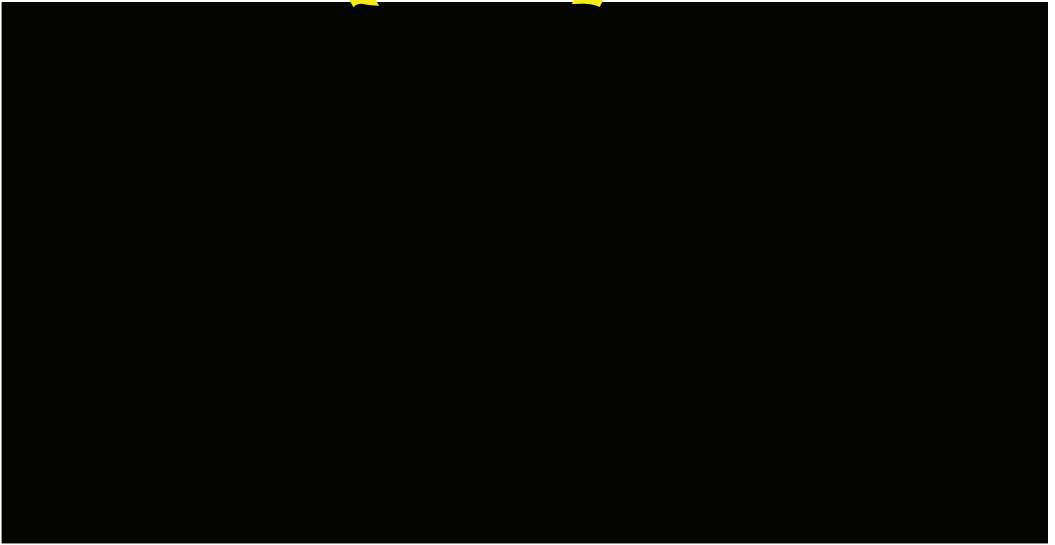




# Sunrise

Most mornings, I'm a little in awe when the sun comes up and the world fills with light and I get to say good morning to the one I love.

I guess there's a part inside me that thinks it's all so improbable.



## Rare Thing

Snarl on the highway. Lineup at Foodland. Out of mint tea and only four sprouts left.

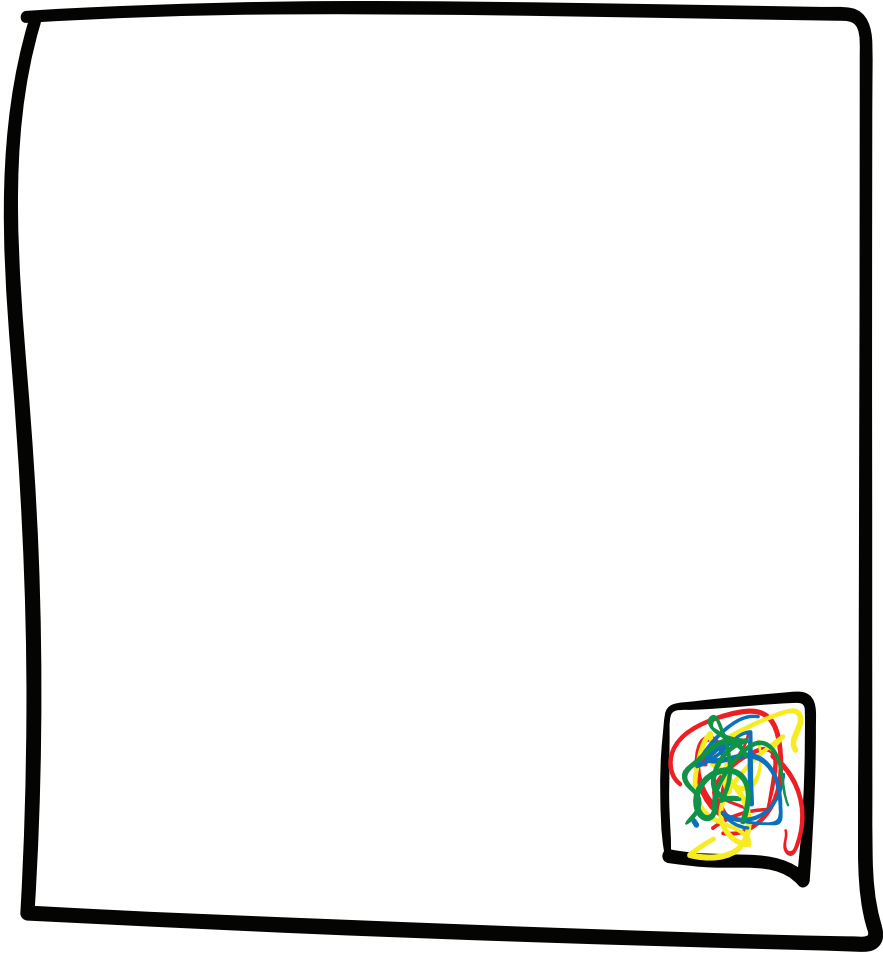
Computer's updating. Door's blowing open. There's a wasp elbow deep in my cold can of Coke.

Garbage is stinking. Windows are streaking. Goopy mud on my shoes from the flood on the hill.

Rocks formed of stardust.

Oaks making oxygen.

Such a rare thing that this world is at all.



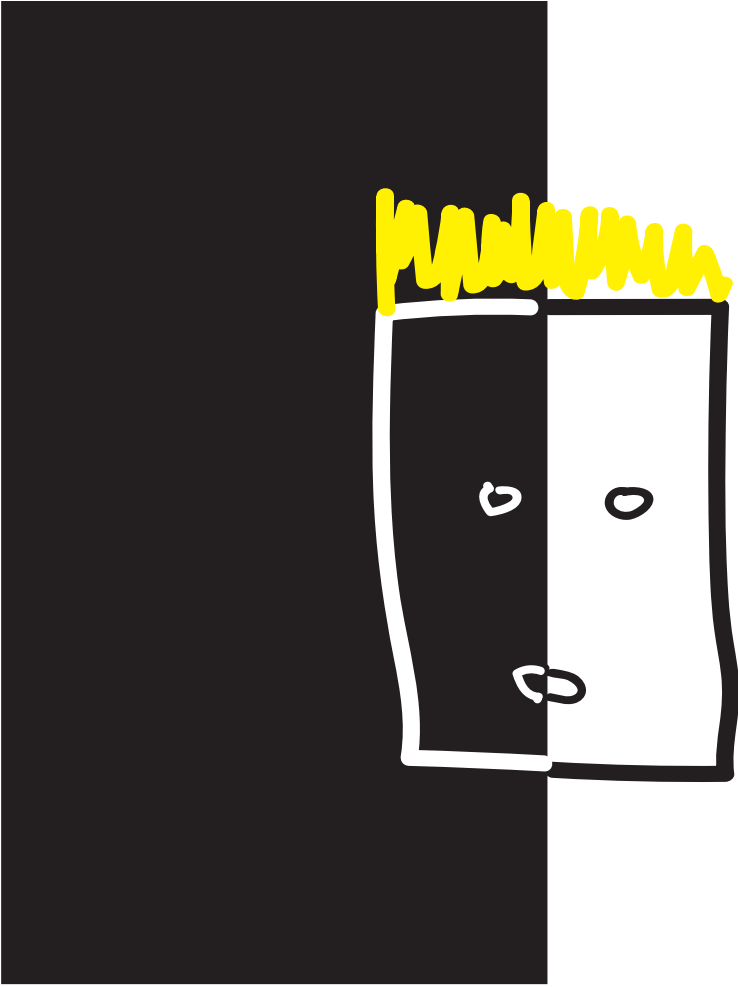
# The Wind

An empty, empty morning with nothing but the wind.

That breeze, touching the leaves of the aspen. Those leaves, which jostle and chatter. And through the window, I see shivering.

That wind, from Huron or Calgary, filling my senses.

Because I'm part of the world which is part of me.



# I Don't Know

I don't know where that wind is from or why the air's so chill. I've no clue where the woodchuck is—sleeping or plucking fruit in the berry field?

Why have the birds disappeared? Where have they flown and when? That plant newly flowering when its brother is dead—a mystery I cannot solve.

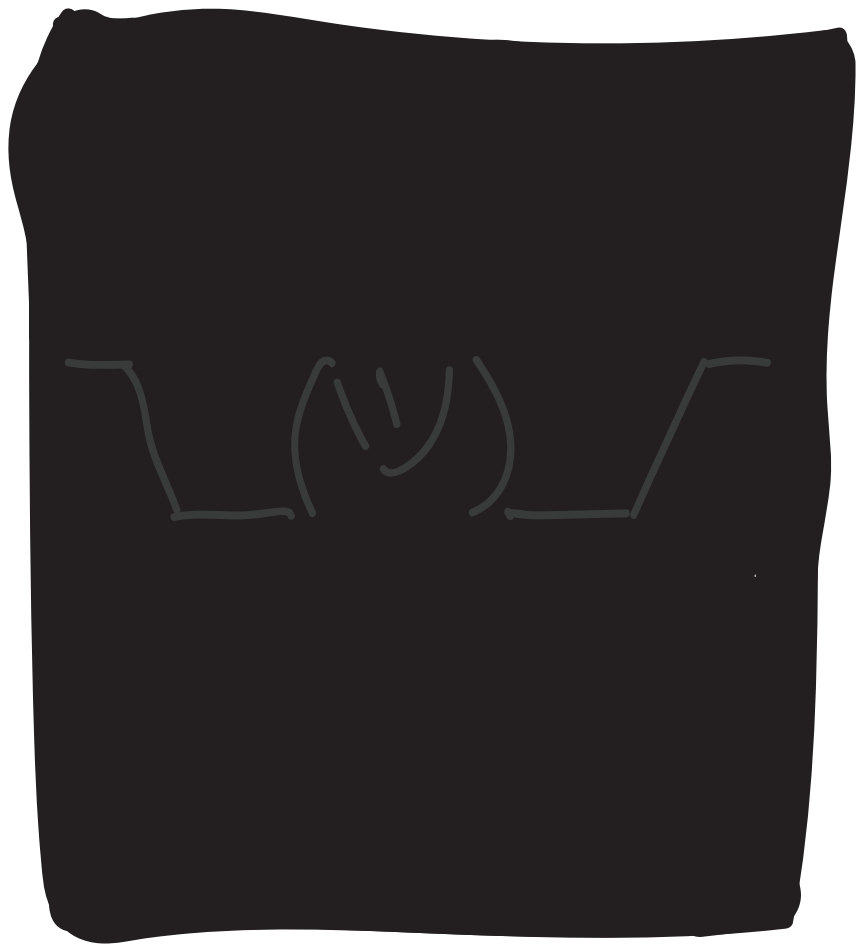
I don't know when the leaves will turn or when the snow will fly. If there'll be storms I've no idea or if that drop of rain will lead to more.

The green frog hasn't told me where it lives or what it ate today. The squirrel so busy going somewhere—to where it does not say.

I don't know how long I'll sit out here. I don't know what will happen this week. I don't know when or how I'll die. It could even be today.

That's why I'm holding everything lightly. It's probably the only way.





## The Peach

There's a ripe peach inside my chest, delicate and soft.

Why do I carry that peach with me, so easily hurt and vulnerable?

Is the peach part of me? Can I let it out? Can I protect it in a stiff, hard case?

Or can I allow it to be squished a little, knowing its peachiness remains?



## The Nest

I uncovered the sparrow's nest in the woodpile.  
It was made of hay,  
stiff, strong and light  
with a perfect oval dent.

My brother, the engineer.

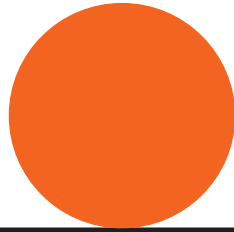


# Sunset

I watched the sun go down last night.

And I thought, how strange:  
the perfect distance,  
the ideal gravity,  
the right molecules.

All of it  
so I could witness a sinking star and wonder  
what to make for dinner.



## Rock Time

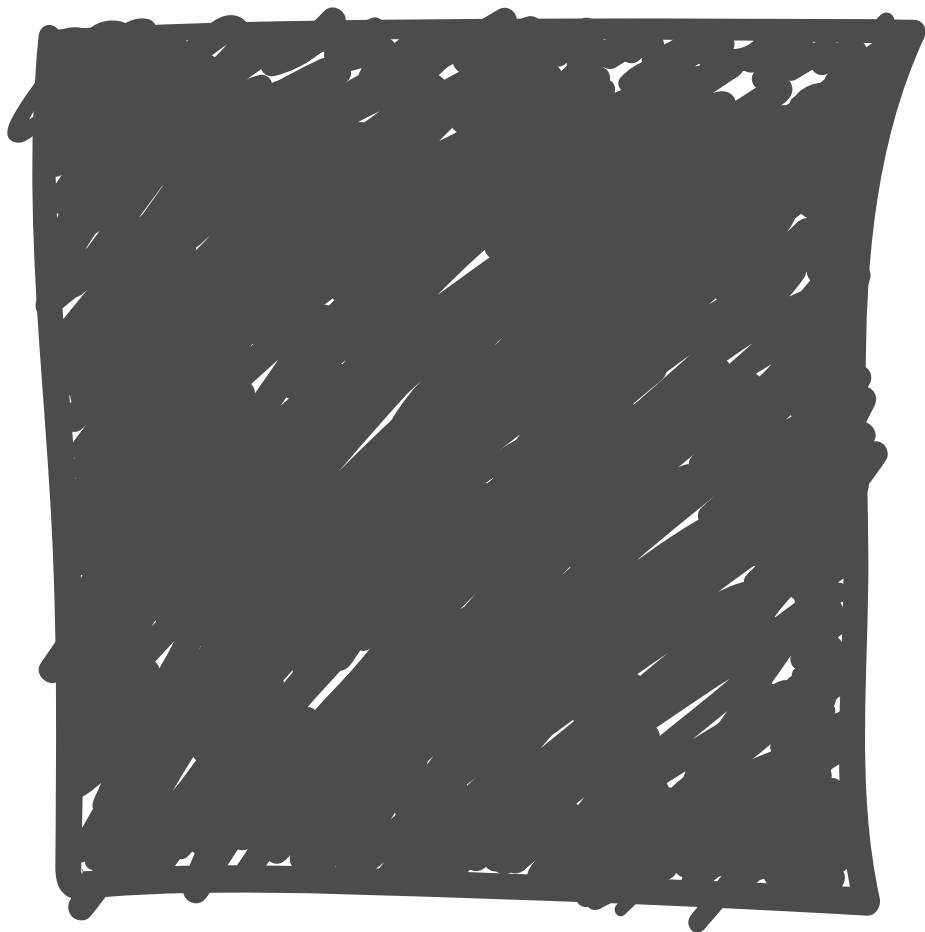
The slabby rock behind my house has been around for a billion years, give or take.

It will outlast me, already halfway through this thing called life.

But when I scramble up close and investigate, when I poke my fingers at its scaly surface or find the maple saplings prying open its crevices, I notice that it—too—is dying.

Or becoming something new.





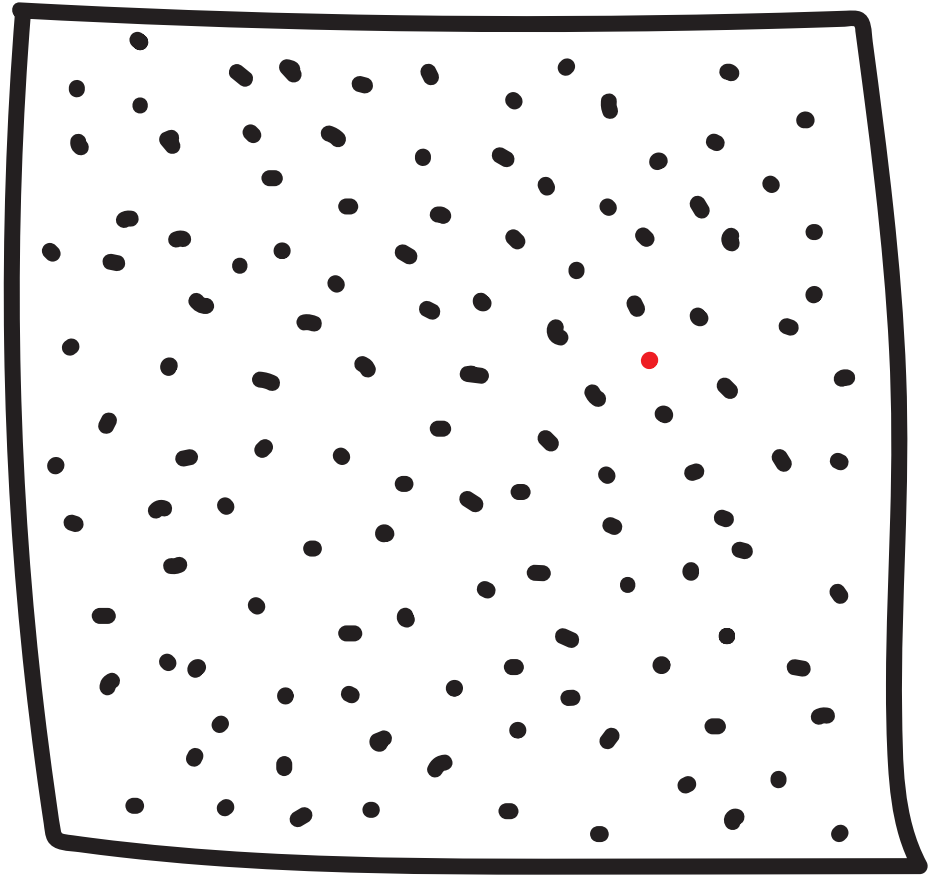
# Wastefully Efficient

Look at nature  
with its thousand trees  
and their million leaves.

Billions of sperm,  
trillions of bacteria.

Mosquitoes,  
dragonflies,  
moths.

So much,  
so wastefully  
efficient.

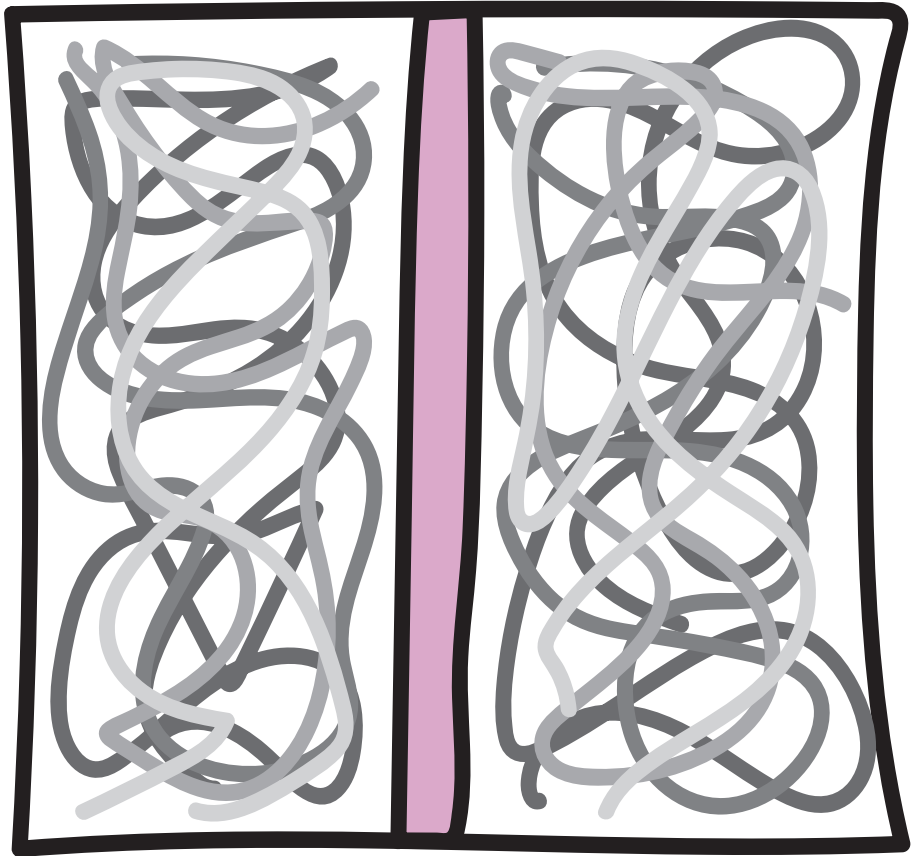


# Ice Cream

Once I drove into a moose and believed I was going to die.

In the future I might be poor, alone and living by the side of the road.

Here's a bowl of strawberry ice cream and it's delicious.



## Beautiful Mortality

I don't want to go skydiving or rock climbing.

I won't jump between rooftops or race Highway 401.

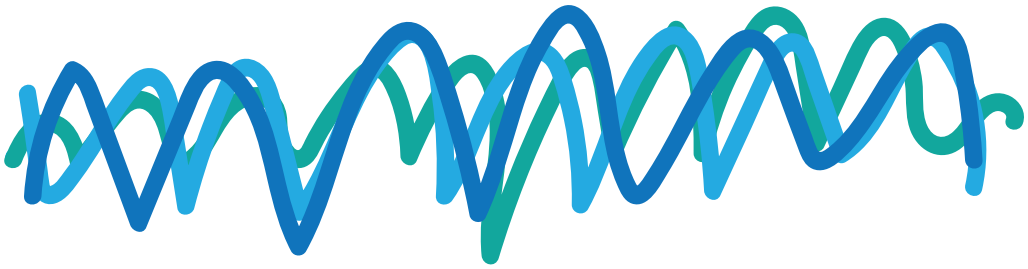
Instead, I'll sit here, feeling mortal and adoring the scent of the forest.



## Down Deep

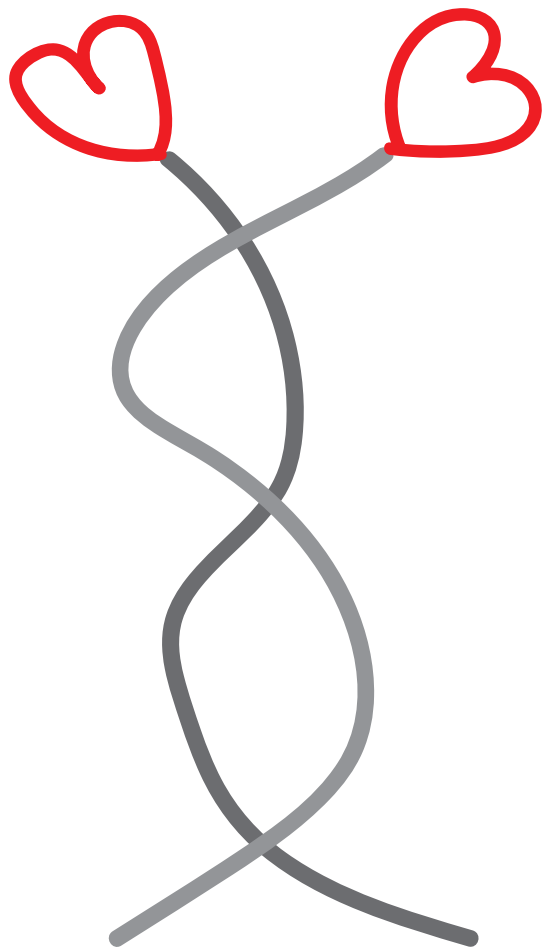
Rocked on the foamy waves,  
I easily forget just feet below  
is a calm tank of well-being.  
Only a plunge away.





# Alive

On a sullen day with a gentle breeze, the heavy hemlock, the bronzed beech, the peeling bark—they're all softly moving in a dance of aliveness.



# Nowhere Slowly

Let us go nowhere slowly  
and find the world—  
the woodpecker knock  
and the chickadee float.  
Let us love the giggling  
choir of the stream and  
the brave clover shoots.  
Let us go nowhere slowly  
and feel the rocky, squidgy ground  
reveal its stories to our feet.



Snubsta is the creation of Simon Payn.

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the lake, the daisies,  
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