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The Green Poem: An Original Play in Two Acts

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THE GREEN POEM
An Original Play in Two Acts
By Emily Arancio

Characters (In Order of Appearance)ACT I

Atom #1

Atom #2

L

E (Played by the same actor who portrayed Atom #1)

Ataraxia

Aponia

Atom #3 (Played by the same actor who portrayed Atom #2)

Body (Portrayed by the same actor who portrayed Aponia)

Soul (Played by the same actor who portrayed Ataraxia)

Mirror #1 (Played by the same actor who portrayed Ataraxia)

Mirror #2 (Played by the same actor who portrayed Aponia)

ACT II

Doctor Figure (Played by the same actor who portrayed Aponia)

Mother Figure (Played by the same actor who portrayed Ataraxia)

Whole Body/L (Played by the same actor who portrayed L)

E

Atom #4 (Played by the same actor who portrayed Atom #2 and Atom #3)

ACT I**Prologue**

(This is a voiceover played in a blackout. The actor playing "L" pre-records these words. This is a direct quote from Book 2 of "On The Nature of Things" by Lucretius, an Ancient Roman philosopher and poet)

"When bodies fall through empty space
 Straight down, under their own weight, at a random time and place,
They swerve a little. Just enough of a swerve for you to call
 It a change of course. Unless inclined to swerve, all things would fall
 Right through the deep abyss like drops of rain. There would be no
 Collisions, and no atom would meet atom with a blow,
 And Nature thus could not have fashioned anything, full stop."¹

scene i

(Lights up on Atom #1 and Atom #2. They are both participating in a synchronized, forward motion, as if to embody "falling in a void." The lighting here should be slightly surreal, possibly in its dimness or coloring, to indicate this is happening in someone's mind)

(Atom #1 has a very curious nature about her: excited at the prospect of life, but at the same time, extremely timid. She carries an undertone of anxiety over the many questions she is grappling with. Where is she? What is this large, empty, lonely space? Atom #2, on the contrary, is very neutral and seems to embody a lack of energy or care for his surroundings)

Atom #1

Hey, there.

Atom #2

Oh, hello. I'm not often spoken to.

Atom #1

Do you know where we're going?

Atom #2

No, I never do. Never have.

¹ Caro, Tito Lucretio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 2, Lines 216-222. London: Penguin, 2007.

Atom #1

How do we get out? How do I stop falling?

Atom #2

...

Atom #1

You must wonder, too?

Atom #2

(Thinking for a moment)

Well, you "Swerve," I guess. But trust me, it's something you can never come back from.

Atom #1

"Swerve"?

Atom #2

It's hard to know exactly when it comes. A sudden wind sweeps any in its path. Then, clumps are formed and off you go. On some journey. Your role in this particular life.

Atom #1

Are you sure there's no bottom? To this void?

Atom #2

For as long as I can remember: darkness. Falling. I've nearly forgotten what it's like to talk. There's no bottom.

Atom #1

(Pondering this news)

How have you managed to escape the "Swerve"?

Atom #2

That's a good question. Fate, I guess. Luck. I've been forced to watch. Listen. Wonder each time if it's my turn. *(pause)* You've been taken by the "Swerve." Many times. Each end of cycle, an erase of memory. That's why you have no idea where you are.

Atom #1

Can you...*(trying to find the word)* jump into the Swerve? Force yourself into its path?

Atom #2

I suppose you could try.

Atom #1

You never wanted to?

Atom #2

I'm content. If I get swept up, I get swept up. If not, this is familiar terrain. Peaceful. I've slowly come to terms with it.

(A sound of gushing wind from backstage)

Atom #1

Did you hear that?

Atom #2

That's the "Swerve." The gust of wind I was talking about.

Atom #1

I've never heard it that loudly before. It always sounds so far off.

(Pause)

I think I'll pursue it. Take control.

Atom #2

Why so eager?

Atom #1

This void. It's dark, cold. It isn't peaceful to me. I'm not content. *(looking around)*
Anywhere but this.

Atom #2

Goodbye. I admire your "green-ness." I wish you well. In the off chance we were to cross paths again, we won't remember.

Atom #1

Thank you.

Atom #2

Before you go. Thank you. For talking to me. I'll hold on to it for as long as I can.

(Atom #1 turns to face Atom #2 and smiles. We hear the sound of the wind again and Atom #1 runs offstage to embrace it)

(L enters. He has a notebook in hand and is writing, contemplating. This scene between the two Atoms happened in his mind. L does not have any particular features worth pointing out, nor does he have to be “played” in any particular way. L can be anyone, really. In many ways he stands in for the people of our world contemplating the major questions of life. Moreover, L is a “timeless figure.” While he is based on the philosopher Lucretius, he will be making more contemporary references in order to bridge the gap between Ancient Rome and today)

L

That must be how it works.

The “Swerve” comes along and takes any or all in its way.

Then, when hundreds of atoms clump,

Whatever combination they are,

A certain life is formed,

A certain object. Anything.

Hmm.

Maybe they can’t choose to pursue the “Swerve”?

I’ll probably take that out...

I do like that idea, though.

(Pause. He then decides to speak to the goddess Venus. This mirrors the beginning of Lucretius’s work “De Rerum Natura”)

Genetrix of Rome, alma Venus,

I stand before you--the moon:

My only company.

A tame wind rustles

The trees, soft goosebumps

Paint my arms.

I have entered a grove of thought,

An orchard of contemplation.

And I look to you, my dear Venus,

For guidance as I ponder

De Rerum Natura.

(Reading the Lucretius quote from his notebook. L looks at his notebook each time he, or another character, reads a direct quote. The bold words indicate the original Latin:)

“Life-stirring Venus:

For you,

the **aequora** laughs, the rivers grin,

And for you,

the **lumen** radiates powerfully

Over those who inhabit its fruitful land.

“Because alone you steer the nature of things upon its course.”²

Now,

We begin.

In the beginning, *(catching himself)*

In the beginning?

(smiling) You all probably want a beginning--

But, there is no beginning. I’m sorry.

There never was one.

What is here and now? And what is to come?

These are questions worth asking.

Let’s be real--

One can never “perceive Time in and of itself.”³

“The universe knows no limitation of time.”⁴

“Time:” *(he motions these quotations with his hands)*

It doesn’t exist.

More on that later!

Atom #1

(So as we know, Atom #1 has decided to force herself into the “Swerve.” She happened to land amongst the brain stem, where the brain meets the spinal cord. This spot can sometimes be where our unconsciousness lays. Think of Atom #1 as a representative of our larger mind)

² Caro, Tito Lucretio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Beginning of Book 1. London: Penguin, 2007.

³ Caro, Tito Lucretio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 1, Line 462. London: Penguin, 2007.

⁴ Carus, Titus Lucretius, and Frank O. Copley. *On The Nature of Things*. Page xvii. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.

(Atom #1 enters from stage left and interrupts L's spiel on "Time")

Excuse me? *(turns towards audience)* I'm sorry to interrupt.
(turns back to L) Can you tell me where I am?

L

Ah, just on time.

(To Atom #1)

Well, I'm not sure I have an answer to that.

Perhaps it's best to say...the beg...*(correcting himself)*

The...start of our...?

(Gets off track for a moment)

Hmm...maybe "Time" should have been a character

In this little play.

But if it doesn't exist, then--

(Turning back to E)

Oh right. You asked where we are.

Let me think.

I think I should start with?

The origin of our...

Of our universe?

(Trying to get back on track and explain this to E)

Atoms fall in a void.

They fall steadily through a vacuum of sky,

Like "drops of rain."⁵

Atom #1

Rain?

L

(Not quite sure how to respond to Atom #1's lack of knowledge of how the world works)

That's all there is,

Atom and void.

Matter and emptiness.

Together, they form life,

Together, a little dance is danced,

Man is built,

⁵ Caro, Tito Lucrecio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 2, Lines 220. London: Penguin, 2007.

The ocean sits among the earth,
 Trees spring from fallen atoms--
 Remnants of those who have died.
 Sheer accident,
 Ordered chaos.

Atom #1

(Deeply confused)

...

But. Here. Now.
 This place?
 Where--?

L

I guess I don't have a concrete answer for you.

Atom #1

Oh, wait...the "void" ...I--I remember that.
 Some far off place...?
(Atom #1 is lost in thought for a moment)

L

I'm "L," I guess I should say.
 And we're on a stage.
 There's an answer for you!
 This is a play, of sorts. Me,
 A character, of sorts.
 And you?

Atom #1

...I'm not sure....

L

We'll call you...hmm...
 "E".
 After a man I hold dear to me.
 The inspiration for all of this--
(Gestures to the stage)
 My rants on life. The Universe. "Time." *(again, gesturing)*

Epicurus. My predecessor.

Never knew him.

(Pause)

I guess you're now a character in this play, too.

Maybe "dramatic piece" is a better way to put it.

(Taking on a "teaching" tone, almost to show off)

I exist in the realm of this stage, but you'll come to see,

I occupy a very different territory all together:

I transcend the domains of "Time" and Space,

Existing in a liminal scope between

The life of our main character, and the creation

Of the cosmos itself.

This very play--uh--"dramatic piece" I mean--

That's our "cosmos."

Fancy ideas, I know.

(turning to E)

I'll find a way to write you in.

In the meantime, back stage is that way.

(Points to the back door of the stage, E exits, then L turns back to the audience)

I'm a philosopher, by the way.

I'm sure you've picked up on that.

I use words like "cosmos," and "domain."

Anyway. Call me what you will, as again,

I'm here...with you...on this stage...a character

One might say,

But am I..?

(Laughs hysterically. L thinks he is very funny and clever)

I'm a poet too.

That's important.

I'm in the process of writing a book.

(Pause)

Idea #1. Let's think.

Hmm. Enter E. Stage left.

Questioning...*(taking a moment to decide)*

Death.

E

(Asking the audience)

Are you afraid to die?

(Pause, then contemplating the question:)

We have smaller destinations,
 A quick stroll to a corner store
 To buy a screwdriver,
 Some lemons,
 A pair of gloves,
 A sidewalk often guides us there,
 Sometimes a highway or a dirt road,
 It's a means of travel,
 A designated journey
 Spread before your feet,
 The wheels of your car, your muddy sneakers,

But do you ever think--
 Maybe you don't,
 I don't mean to put words in your mouth.
 Do you ever think--
 These roads, these slabs of pavement,
 All the walks you take,
 Are just smaller paths

Towards death? That's what we're walking
 Towards anyway? Isn't it?
 A convoluted map towards
 Heaven and Hell,
 Or just that pit in the ground,
 Or our dust spread within the woods.
 Becoming part of the green.
 Trees, leaves, moss.

I like to think I won't die.

I like to think that by the time I grow to
 Be older, older than I am now,

Death will be an option, if you'd like,
But it would be a choice.

You could choose to keep going, too.
Maybe I say this because I fear it--
And the easy way out,
The murder of that terror,
Is some kind of cure.

L

(To the audience)

Think about that for a moment.

(Pause)

Now! There are these...ideas...concepts, rather.

Epicurus introduces them.

I think they'll help us find peace in death?

Their names:

Ataraxia and Aponia.

They will now

Enter from stage right--

Ataraxia

(Ataraxia enters from stage right. She is an older woman. She has an edge to her, a cynical sense of humor. She tells it like it is. Interrupting:)

L, why are we here?

L

(to Ataraxia)

One moment.

(Ataraxia rolls her eyes, L turns back to the audience)

They're going to be characters in this play--

Let me define them:

Ataraxia: a state of mental serenity.

Aponia: the absence of physical suffering.

Both are the ultimate goal. Both should,

Eventually,

Alleviate our fear of death.

Help us find sustained happiness.

The closest thing to perfect:

What I strive for,
 What I've accomplished. *(proud of himself)*
 I warn you, though, in my mind,
 They're an old married couple,
 Lots of love, *lots* of bickering.
(to Ataraxia)
 Listen--

Ataraxia

(Interrupting again)

I'm awfully anxious L, when you put me in the spotlight. When you use me for your little scenes. My stagefright! You know me. I need to be in a constant state of tranquility. This uncertainty--this attention--it isn't helping.

L

I hate to put you through any--

Aponia

(Aponia is also an older character, though much less cynical and without Ataraxia's edge. Aponia appears rather meek but is able to hold his own. Ataraxia and Aponia should embody contrasting personalities, Ataraxia often taking the spotlight. To Ataraxia:)

This isn't helping *you*? How do you think I feel? I'm supposed to encompass a total absence of bodily pain, and walking all this way hasn't helped my hips. No sirree.

(L points to E. E stands off to the side. She is clearly in distress)

Ataraxia

Ohhh, I see.

Aponia

Target acquired. A young pupil. Look at her. So fresh,
 So green.

Ataraxia

She must be...?

Aponia

Afraid of life. Afraid of death. All of it.

Ataraxia

Your newest protege? (*mocking L a little*)

L

Easy on her you two...
 I'm hoping you can
 Guide her. Help me,
 Help the audience,
 To carve a path. Of sorts.
 Plant a seed of understanding.

Ataraxia

It's been awhile since--
 How can we go back...
 To remembering?

Aponia

Those days
 Of sublimity,
 Blissful peace of mind,
 Uncreaky limbs,
 No fear of death.
 And now...to help someone?
 Guide her?
 You haven't asked this of us in--
 I'm not sure,
 Your last protege,
 When was that?
 (*L doesn't answer*)
 You're asking a lot of us.
 Why can't *you* help her?

Ataraxia

Hmm.
 We used to be--
 I used to be--
 The embodiment of mental pleasure...
 And you--

Aponia

Physical, bodily pleasure. That's right.

How long it's been.

Why again? Did we get to be here?

Like this?

Broken.

(Pause)

Followers of Epicurus--

They always call upon us.

Expect answers from us.

We should be getting paid for this!

Ataraxia

...

We wanted so badly to be

Perfect.

I think that led to our downfall?

I know Epicurus created us to be that.

Perfect.

It's a lot of pressure, L.

I hate to break it to you. I don't know if...

We can be what you want us to be?

(She turns to E and looks at her for a moment. Her faith is restored)

And yet, I will try.

Death. It isn't so scary--

Uh, remind me of your name?

E

Um, E.

Aponia

E? *(pause. She is perplexed by the oddness of her name)*

E

I..uh...I didn't choose it.

Aponia

Anyway, yes. Death...

I have an idea. Close your eyes.

(Aponia lays down on the ground, eyes closed, and embodies "Death")

Okay...open.

E

(Looking at the body on the ground)

What am I supposed to...?

(Turning to Ataraxia)

Is he...

Ataraxia

(Catching on to Aponia's plan)

Dead? Yes.

Cause: a respiratory illness.

Arguably man's most gruesome death.

E

Why would you show me...?

Ataraxia

(Interrupting)

Listen.

As soon as someone felt it brewing from within,

A certain physical toil,

They knew.

Death was upon them.

And thinking like an already dead man,

He lay there. Lifeless.

Saying a premature farewell to both his Body and Soul,

In his delirium,

Aching, screaming Body,

He watches his Soul,

After the quiet farewell,

Lift slowly from his body,

Disintegrate into the ground,

Still alive.

(Aponia acts all of this out. E is horrified)

E

But--

Ataraxia

His own death before his very eyes.
 He watches all of it before it happens.
 A cloud, a dream:
 Has an exchange with it,
 Accepts it.
 Welcomes it.
(Pause. Aponia slowly stands)

Aponia

Now: "Why does Death make his untimely rounds?"⁶
(As Aponia reads this Lucretius quote, L looks to his notebook)
 You might ask.

Ataraxia

Death isn't the end.
 Well, actually, it is. For you.
 The atoms, the matter,
 They renew.
 A cycle.
 Even in the midst of all that pain,
 There's peace. A farewell to oneself,
 And then a welcoming of new life.
(Pause)
 How'd we do, L? *(semi-joking)*

(E is lost in thought)

L

You never fail to please. *(semi-joking back)*
 Thank you, Ataraxia and Aponia. You are free to go.
 Silence fills the stage.

⁶ Caro, Tito Lucretio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 5, Line 221. London: Penguin, 2007.

E

(Interrupting, breaking the silence)

But--

Why *does* "Death make his untimely rounds?"

People must do something--

To deserve it?

How do they get to that place--

Of peace?

Ready to say goodbye?

L

Death doesn't choose.

It just...comes.

At random.

But. Remember.

We can't control it. Isn't there

Comfort in that?

We live until we don't.

And then, even if our death is as painful as

A deadly virus,

Our atoms can become something different.

In a way, we're never forgotten.

(Reading from his notebook:)

"To fear death, then, is foolish,

Since death is the final and complete

Annihilation of personal identity,

The ultimate release from anxiety and fear."⁷

(L stands watching E grapple with this new reality she is contemplating)

E

But I don't--

L

(E seems uneasy. L interrupts her somewhat harshly)

Don't dwell. Accept it.

⁷ Carus, Titus Lucretius, and Rolfe Humphries. *Lucretius, the Way Things Are: the De Rerum Natura of Titus Lucretius Carus*. London: Indiana University Press, 1969.

Blackout.

On to the next topic.

(Black out)

scene ii

(Split focus on both E and L. E stands stage left, and L stands stage right. Some time has passed)

E

I used to hate the cold.
The numb feeling in my fingers,
Feeling the jarring breeze
Sneak into the uncovered surfaces
Of my skin--

L

She's beginning to understand what this place is.

E

Now, it's a feeling I can feel--
A sensation in my hands,
And that feeling makes me feel alive,
Feel human, and that feeling
Is tangible. Definitive.
Right outside the door:

L

Life. The world. Senses. The cold.

E

I'm greeted by a reassuring gust,
And then, that feeling. Guaranteed.
If nothing else,
I am cold.

L

Enough "Time" *(gesturing the quotations again)* has passed.
I had to set her free,

Give her a chance to learn.

E

The cold holds a thousand slaps

In its harsh wind.

My increasing momentum,

My running, sprinting to warmth,

Offers an even harsher wind.

I'm running from

My problems:

A long conversation,

The clock waiting bitterly for a decision,

Rolling its eyes as, clearly,

With each passing minute, I fall

Farther into the depths of indecisiveness.

L

Grapple with its truth. Its pain.

E

The cold, as sharp as it is,

Gives me a decision:

A decision to be cold, incentive to run

Towards something: my bed

Where I sit and breathe, and finally,

Feel the disappointment.

L

That's the only way to digest it all.

(Turning to the audience)

She is our vessel, afterall.

Your vessel.

For my book.

Embodying my concepts.

That's all she really is.

The "nature" of our thoughts.

The green.

Don't worry too much about her--

Her "feelings." She can be dramatic.

E

(Talking to the audience. She speaks with devastation)

He, L,
 Always tells me when
 To be quiet. Silent.
 Where to enter,
 When to enter. I want
 To decide
 Those things
 For myself.

(Pause)

I feel pretty lonely—
 Not sure who to call.
 I met someone. This feeling--
 Developed.
 L warned me that would happen.
 Warned me against it, I should say.

It started off a tingle.
 I'm not sure where.
 A rush.
 It was different.
 Ineffable.
 He was tall, happy, simple.
 I felt warm. From then on,
 Hated to be chilly.

(L begins to back away. He is uncomfortable at her discussion of E's feelings. E is now alone on stage)

I got scared, started to run,
 From myself of course. Who else?
 I drove him away,
 Wounded the bond we made, hurt him.

I know I do.
 Want to call someone.
 But the person I want to be with--

The person I want to call--
We're in this weird place.
An in-between.
It's difficult to articulate.

(Pause)

The moon seems to be my only
Company, these days.
She makes me search for her.
Sometimes in plain sight, other times
Behind a sleepy skyline, or
Peeking through a far-off smokestack.
My legs are creaky
From the day, mind misty, the soles of my shoes
Dragging on sandy concrete. My thoughts—
Often swirling images of regret,
How I'd do things differently,
I frequently imagine a world where I knew,
What to do, how to feel.
How to fix the swirling pain I caused.

If I'm lucky, a feeling of content
And knowing of a peaceful sleep.
I have a route I know-- guided by
Months of translucent footsteps: I am
Gretel--
From that story,
Dropping small fragments of
Dreamy hopes along an empty road.
A road made up of white,
Trees erased,
Moon disappeared,
A far off memory.
I wander aimlessly through a world of nothing.

(Pause. Looking up at the sky again)

A shiny sliver, a round golden dome, I admire
Your shape in the darkness.

(Pause)

Dark.

...

Why is it always so dark?

I can't see the moon tonight.

Though,

The stars are out:

Absent yesterday.

(Pause. She is overcome with panic. She scrambles to find help from someone)

L?

L?!

Everytime I want

To talk with him,

He never

Comes--

Only on his terms.

Self-serving,

Always.

(The same character who played Atom #2 enters stage right. He is now a different Atom)

Atom #3

I don't think he'll answer.

E

(Startled)

Oh! You scared me.

Why not?

He's always here. He's always watching,

Scrutinizing, telling me how I should live.

(E starts to get worked up)

I know he's listening!

L! L! I know you're hiding!

You brought me here! You made me feel this!

Atom #3

(Cutting off her building break down)

Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you.

(Pause)

He didn't create you--

You were already there.

I've come to learn this

For myself.

(Pause)

He isn't able to hear this. This talk of--

Affection, attachment.

"Amor." He'd call it.

He doesn't really

Allow it.

E

But...how can he...decide...what to hear?

Atom #3

It's not so much that he doesn't hear it.

It's that he pushes it away.

Refuses to hear it.

E

Hmm. *(thinking for a moment)*

Well, is there a way we can make him hear?

Atom #3

(Smiles)

I wish it were that easy.

E

Who are you, anyway?

Atom #3

Same as you. A member of...*(trying to find the words)*

the...cohort of his subconscious?

I used to be like you.

His newest "pupil."

His newest "project."

He soon moved on from me,

Found someone new.

(Pause),

I've watched him deny love. From afar.

More than once.

You and I--we're deep in
the depths of his mind.

But I'm fortunate. I don't deal with love.

I'm a part of his subconscious that

He can, at least sometimes, access. Activate.

Though I'm often left alone,

Too.

E

(Taking a moment)

He used to take care of me--

Took the time.

Atom #3

You were his project.

He likes to start these projects.

I told you--

He activates these parts of his mind,

And then he leaves them,

Abandons them.

He's good at compartmentalizing.

E

I wish I didn't have to deal with this.

Any of it.

This unsteadiness.

My lingering state of confusion--

Whose spell has been cast

In seeming permanence;

Whose spell began the day

I left him.

Whose spell is a cloud of invisible mist

Falling delicately on a thick wool jacket;

Whose cloud is grey and hazy.
Whose smell is that of
Damp summer leaves;
Whose smell lasts only until
The sun warms their skin;
Whose smell comes back
With the next sunny rain:

My persistent loss
Of clarity--
Whose soul lingers
In a bottomless purgatory;
Whose soul is stuck in
A man I used to love;
Whose soul moves like
A dangerous current, sweeping
Me into its surging foam.

With the jagged edges
Of a rhombus;
With the softness of a circle;
With the distortion
Of a pentagon:

My chronic turmoil.
With the teeth of a saber-toothed deer,
With the body of a platypus;
Whose fur fails to match its
Webbed stout feet;
Whose small beady eyes
Are that of a beaver,
Its feet those of an otter.

Whose spell will eventually expire?
Whose clouds will dissipate?
Whose arms may do a gentle
Wave, and I'll hope
It means goodbye.

(Turning to Atom #3)

I've been working on that poem.
I'm trying to articulate it all.
I seem to think mainly--
In poetry.

Atom #3

It's beautiful.

E

Thank you. *(shyly)*

(Pause)

What were you before now?

Do you remember?

Atom #3

No, I don't remember.

I like to imagine, though.

At one point, a drop

Of the Caspian Sea---

Another time

A piece of willow bark,

A bright feather

On the wings of a scarlet macaw,

A finger nail, maybe.

E

Being part of the subconscious--

It's tricky.

It's complicated. Ambiguous.

Lonely.

It seems there are so many

Easier roles. A drop of water!

How simple. A dream--

I can't imagine.

Atom #3

We're lucky most would say.

We're part of

The thinking mind.
The most maddening thing you could be,
I suppose.
A lot of freedom.
Sometimes, too much.
Often, too--

E

Lucky? *(laughs to herself)*
(Pause)
What now?

Atom #3

Acceptance? Submittance? Hard to say.
Don't give up on these feelings.
Feel them until L has to listen.
Stop running.

E

Oh, you heard me.

Atom #3

What?

E

The thing about running.

Atom #3

Oh that, yes. I overheard.
We're part of the same brain,
You know.
(Smiles. Then a pause)
Keep going.

E

What?

Atom #3

Just--
 Keep going.
 That's all I have to say.
 I gave up. Stayed silent.

E
 I never caught your name--

Atom #3
 L, he named me.
 I can't remember at this point.
 And you?

E
 L named me too.
 "E."
 After a man, someone he looks up to,
 Epi--?
 Who knows. Doesn't matter at this point.
(E turns to Atom #3, but before she has a chance to say anything, he has vanished. She is left alone again)
 Hello?!
 L?
 L!

(Pause. She looks at the sky again)

She has to be somewhere.
 The moon, I mean.
 Made from matter,
 "For nothing can arise from nothing..."⁸
 Blah blah blah...
 Now I sound like--
 ...
 I could have been the ocean.
 That single drop of water.
 Maybe even part of the moon.

⁸ Caro, Tito Lucrecio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 1, Line 269. London: Penguin, 2007.

....

L? Please.

...

Enter stage left?

Enter,

Stage...uh...right?

(turning to audience) That's what he says, right?

RIGHT?

Center stage?

Lights up? L?

L!

(Pause)

You were supposed to write my part--

You've left me here?...

What am I supposed to--

(E turns, looks at the back stage door and runs out. The stage sits empty for a moment)

(L enters)

L

Where is she?

She ran?

(Pause. He thinks about what to do. He can't stand this uncertainty and lack of control)

Enter Atom #3.

Stage right.

(Atom #3 enters)

She ran.

Atom #3

Hello to you, too.

It's been awhile.

L

Very funny.

Help me, will you?

Atom #3

Now you're asking for my help? Ha!

Convenient.

Only when you need something.

(L doesn't say anything. After a moment Atom #3 says:)

She seemed like a fighter.

Should I try and go after her?

L

We'll have to challenge her.

To come back somehow.

Show her it's okay.

I didn't permit her to leave. She isn't

Allowed,

To do that. Defy me

In that way.

Atom #3

(Thinks for a moment)

The mirrors?

L

Ahh...yes... the psychological mirrors.

Her reflection!

Self reflection.

Atom #3

A journey through the "glass."

(bitterly) You made me do that.

L

She'll stop running eventually.

(L picks up his notebook. He reads from it:)

"For any beast you look upon that drinks life-giving air,
Has either wits, or bravery, or fleetness of foot to spare,
Ensuring its survival from its genesis to now."⁹

⁹ Caro, Tito Lucrecio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 5, Lines 875-859. London: Penguin, 2007.

Atom #3

There's nowhere to go, really.
 She exists inside your mind,
 As do I.

L

There's no way out--

Atom #3

I told her to keep going.
 To keep fighting.

L

(Surprised)

You spoke to her?

Atom #3

(Pause. He wonders whether or not to tell him)

She kept yelling. At first--
 A distant sound.
 This constant far-off agony.
 It rang in my ears. I went to pursue it,
 Eventually.
 It was alluring.
 Her despair. Captivating.
 She wanted you to hear her.
 Help her.
 She's grappling with these thoughts--
 She has trouble articulating them.
 Seething fragments of troubled
 Thoughts. Boiling over.
 Desperate.

L

She always had a theatrical nature about her.
 Very insistent...loud.
 You just have to tune out, eventually.
 Let it run its course.

Atom #3

It was something about--
 You not listening--

L

(Interrupting Atom #3. Atom #3 is noticeably annoyed by this. L always fails to listen to things he does not want to)

Wait, I hear something.
 She's back?
 And there are...others...with her?

(L and Atom #3 walk to the back of the stage and observe as E walks on stage with two "people" behind her. One is her "Soul," the other her "Body." The actor playing Body is the same actor who played Aponia, and Soul is played by the same actor who portrayed Ataraxia. E is out of breath)

E

All the running,
 The hills,
 Surrounded by
 Scrutinising trees,
 A world of angry green,
 The green fading--
 The brown bark,
 More visible.
 The cracked pavement, dirty silver,
 Now forever familiar with my worn out soles,
(Turning towards Soul)
 My frantic, "invisible" Soul too--what's left of it--
 Always 12 steps in front of me.
 And my Body,
 I see it here too--
 Detached, lost, wanting to connect--
 They're following me.

L

(Talking to the audience quietly so that E doesn't hear. L clearly always needs to be in control)

Body and Soul.

She must have stumbled upon them.

Her own...atomic? Body and Soul.

Something isn't right. She's falling apart.

The parts of her...separating.

(Thinking and creating the scene in his head. He always has to take control)

Easy fix.

Enter Soul,

Body, behind her,

Desperate to catch up.

As Soul walks forward,

Body is always one step behind,

And hustles,

With all her might,

To reach,

On the sore "soles" of her feet,

What she thinks,

Is her sole "soulmate."

(L laughs to himself again. He thinks he's so funny...)

Atom #3

(to L)

Why are you hiding?

L

She needs to--

Atom #3

(Realizing what he is trying to do)

Be alone?

Discover for herself? I'm not sure

That's what she needs--

Body

(Interrupting. It seems Atom #3 is always being interrupted)

Wait!

(They all watch this quarrel between Body and Soul, E included)

Soul

Hurry up!

L

(Reading from his notebook:)

“The sensation of the mind is not placed in any part determined”¹⁰

Body

(Interrupting)

Aren't you a part of me?

(L looks at his notebook:)

“The Soul, too, dwells within the limbs”¹¹

Soul

Not if I don't want to be.

E

The soul--

Spirit--

It's able to grow on its own.

It doesn't need a vessel.

It springs forth without warning.

Body

No! I promise. We'd work. Together. I know we would!

Soul

Perhaps we would. I can't help but think, however, of my innate superiority, I'm sorry to say.

L

(Pondering to himself)

The Body and Soul ...*should*...be united.

¹⁰ Caro, Tito Lucrecio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 3, Line 99. London: Penguin, 2007.

¹¹ Carus, Titus Lucretius, and R. C. Trevelyan. *Translations from Lucretius*. Page 32. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1920.

E

(Trying to make sense of this)

I think of my mind as an infinity plant,
A sprouting green,
Budding in many places,

Body

You're so far ahead!

Soul

I'm not stopping for a slowpoke like you.

Body

(Throwing it back at her)

Nice word choice! Slowpoke...Ha! *(mockingly)*
Creative!

E

My body though, is determinate. I have limbs,
These limbs are certain.

(She's trying to reassure herself)

I feel I'm grasping on to anything tangible.

Can my thoughts truly live

Within my brain,

Within the cage of

My skull?

...

I would think it would feel trapped.

Body

I don't have to entrap you. You can still be free--

E

My thoughts float in a soft mist

Around my body,

It glows a translucent aura

Right off the tips of my fingers--

My mind exists

Before my eyes--
It isn't trapped inside
Of anything.

(Body is still chasing after Soul. They circle E)

L

For God's sake! You two...

Body

She won't stop for me!

Soul

(Thinking for a moment. L looks at his notebook as these quotations are read:)

... "The Soul"

Body

"Is close conjoined"

Soul

"With the mind."¹²

Body

Yes! Yes!

Soul

Am I the mind? Or...

Are you?

Body

...We can...both? Be?

Soul

Together?

"So the mind requires the body?"

¹² "The Internet Classics Archive: On the Nature of Things by Lucretius." The Internet Classics Archive, On the Nature of Things by Lucretius. Book 4, Beginning of section entitled "Some Vital Functions." http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.html.

Body

“In order to exist, because the flesh contains the mind--”

Soul

“The lively power of the mind and body only thrive
In partnership with one another...”¹³

Body

It’s how we stay alive.
Balanced.

Soul

(Shaking her head. Reconsidering)

Something tells me though...to keep running?

(Soul sprints backstage away from Body. Body stands alone on stage, devastated. E watches and takes this in. Body eventually exits)

L

Hey Soul! Come back!

(Soul does not come back)

That’s an order!

I’m the director of this...thing,

Aren’t I?

(Again, Soul does not come back)

Soul ran. Left?

I didn’t realize how damaged she is.

What’s her name again?

She must be struggling,

If she’s now--

Now Soulless.

...

When did that happen?

Atom #3

(Frustrated)

¹³ Caro, Tito Lucrecio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 4, Lines 554-559. London: Penguin, 2007.

It's because you won't--

L

(Again, interrupting, suddenly aggravated)

She needs to grow up. Stop running.

This always happens!

The ignorance--

Childishness!

scene iii

(E stands center stage. She is surrounded by Ataraxia and Aponia. They are now embodying "mirrors")

L

It is now time for the "glass."

This is the solution:

(Again, reading from his notebook:)

"Which to our eyes in mirrors do appear,

In water, or in any shining surface."¹⁴

"Now come; with what swift motion they are born,

These images"¹⁵

(E and L now cannot see one another, as E is grappling with feelings that L refuses to participate in or acknowledge. E looks at the two "mirrors". E meets eyes with them as if looking into the eyes of herself)

E

All the chases between me

And the clouds of thought,

The ones that make me feel like

I'm tripping,

Like they'll catch up and swarm

My ankles,

Falling slowly,

Then crashing. Loud.

¹⁴ "The Internet Classics Archive: On the Nature of Things by Lucretius." The Internet Classics Archive, On the Nature of Things by Lucretius. Book 4, "Proem." http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.html.

¹⁵ "The Internet Classics Archive: On the Nature of Things by Lucretius." The Internet Classics Archive, On the Nature of Things by Lucretius. Book 4, Beginning of section entitled "Existence and Character of the Images." http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.html.

Contests between Body and Soul,
Flesh and blood,
Green and black, darkness and light,
All of the races:
They've brought me here.
To
you.

(She looks at each of the "mirrors")

Why are you looking at me?
Mirrors?
Upon mirrors.

You're paying more
Attention to me than
I ever did.
At least you look me
In the eyes.

If you'll listen...
I've seemed to always pursue
A dead end,
A cul-de-sac--

Except it isn't a dead end.
Because.
I turn right back around,
I run the way I came,
Only to find
The same,
Consistent,
Identical,
Nowhere.
By now it's habit. The dead ends. Familiarity.
I knock into the wall, it hurts,
I bruise,
It passes.

It's funny.
 Looking directly into
 My eyes.
 My green weary eyes--
 In looking at them,
 I have, somehow,
 Also,
 Turned my back on myself?
 I look forward, make eye contact,
 I see the green,
 And only a split-second passes before,
 I see it,
 Behind me,
 My back,
 In the glass,
 Turning against itself.
(E acts out these motions)
 That must sound like nonsense.

I assume this is some sort
 Of intervention?
 I ask you two, walls of glass, yes,
 But right now, you are versions of me.
 You are me?
 You look like me.
 Different perspectives, angles.
 You follow my movements.
(She makes different gestures. The figures, or "mirrors," do the same)
 But you're...flat.

Maybe you're my opening.
 A way over the dead-end.
 A cure!

(A new thought occurs to her, and she's momentarily overcome with anger)
 Or maybe you were sent by L.
 A desperate attempt to fix his wrongs.
 A cowardly move.
 Too busy to do the work himself.

I see who you are. I know you.
(They stay silent)

You mock me!
 You scorn, you sneer, your silences
 Are like shards of glass--
 They make up your...brittle! walls of
 Forced scrutiny.
 Scrutiny. I learned that word from him.
 L loves words like that.
 Big, philosophical, smart-sounding.
 HUH L? DO YOU LIKE THAT WORD?
 I KNOW YOU DO!

(Turning back to the mirrors)

The harder I look, the deeper my misery
 Sits,
 Settles,
 Digs,
 Into the depths of your glass.
 I am losing myself in your
 Reflection of me.

(Suddenly pleading)

Let me fall, already?
 That's why you're here.
 To get rid of me.
 Let me fall,

Into your pit of self-destruction.
 I know it's waiting for me:
 The hollow crater,
 The infinite well, deep and cold,
 Even darker than a moonless sky,
 It's hungry,
 And I'm weak.

L

(Looking closely at E as if he's trying to make her out)

Why is she so faded?
 Where is she? I see the mirrors...

She's no longer
--Clear--
In my eyes?
Enter Atom #3!
(Atom #3 enters reluctantly)

Atom #3
You called?

L
I can't see her.

Atom #3
You won't allow yourself
To see her.

L
That doesn't make any sense. She's mine.
I created her.

(L looks frantically for E)

Atom #3
Created...?

E
(Asking the mirrors)
I wonder if I--
Can I wish my soul away on a
New journey?
A--a change of course?
I'm not so sure now,
If I was meant to--

Ataraxia/Mirror #1
(Mirror #1 chimes in. She speaks quietly and calmly)
You can jump.

E

What?

Aponia/Mirror #2

Abandon all this.

E

There's no way it's that easy.

Isn't L listening?

Ataraxia/Mirror #1

He can't hear us.

He's tuned you out.

(Pause)

We're a portal. In disguise.

A way out. He doesn't know.

E

Where will it leave me?

Aponia/Mirror #2

I don't know.

He often sends his "Atoms" here. To us.

To fix his problems.

We tell them they can leave,

But they never do.

Too scared.

They submit to a life of--

Loneliness. Alone

In the void of his mind--

Floating.

Ataraxia/Mirror #1

We take you to the void,

Where you first begun,

The empty space,

The windy realm,

And then you're on your own.

E

(Deeply considering it)

I'm sick of all--
So tired.

(After thinking for a moment, E nods. The two "mirrors" stand next to one another. E "jumps." This is somehow choreographed--perhaps we see E walk between the mirrors, and the two mirrors separate? When she "jumps," we hear the same swooshing of the "Swerve" from the beginning of the play. E is swept up in this "Swerve." The mirrors exit stage left. E is left alone center stage)

Hello?!

BLACK OUT. END OF ACT I.

ACT II**Prologue**

(In a blackout, the voice of E reads these lines)

“For herein lays the hope: they think that they can quench the fire
By means of the same body that ignited their desire,
Something Nature contradicts with all her might. For love
Is unique: the more we have of it, the more it is not enough,
And the more calamitous desire sets the heart aflame.”¹⁶

“Imagine a love that’s crossed and doesn’t have a chance in hell—
Even with your eyes shut, you can grasp that amount
Of troubles in unhappy love are more than you could count.
Best to keep eyes open, as I’ve said—don’t take the bait.
It’s easier to avoid the toils of love than extricate
Yourself once you are caught fast in the nets and to break free
From the strong knots of Venus.”¹⁷

(Now, this Act should be staged in three separate parts of the theatre. Ideally, on different levels of the stage. One scene is happening in the living world. Another scene is happening in a purgatory of sorts, where E is stuck. The third scene is the world of the L, or the Whole Body in which E, a single atom, was a part of, who is existing in a “in-between” place. L lays center stage, eyes closed, for most of the Act as he has developed brain damage from E abandoning her place within his brain stem. Her actions had severe repercussions. In this Act, it is more emphasized that L is this body, in full, to which E belonged to. The Act follows these three stories simultaneously and quickly switches between them. They are all onstage during the entirety of the Act. The pace and transitions should be quick and seamless as the scenes are often brief and episodic)

scene i

(Two actors stand stage right. The actor who played Aponia in Act I now takes on the role of a Doctor Figure. The actor who played Ataraxia plays a Mother Figure--we would assume L’s mother. Whole Body/L lays center stage. E is not yet visible)

¹⁶ Caro, Tito Lucrecio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 4, Lines 1086-1090. London: Penguin, 2007.

¹⁷ Caro, Tito Lucrecio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 4, Lines 1,141-1,148. London: Penguin, 2007.

Doctor Figure/Aponia

Terribly sorry.

Mother Figure/Ataraxia

What?

Doctor Figure/Aponia

Suddenly--

Mother Figure/Ataraxia

--Yes?

Doctor Figure/Aponia

Well-- a strange, Uh--
Occurrence.

Mother Figure/Ataraxia

Occurrence?...

Doctor Figure/Aponia

Chain of events. Almost like—
A switch.
Turned off.
Lights,
Out.

Mother Figure/Ataraxia

Out?

Doctor Figure/Aponia

(Reassuring)

Temporarily.
He's comatose.

Mother Figure/Ataraxia

But...how? I don't--

Doctor Figure/Aponia

Understand. It's hard to,
I know.

Mother Figure/Ataraxia

Can you
I don't know--
Explain
...Anything?

Doctor Figure/Aponia

A kind of purgatory, maybe?

Mother Figure/Ataraxia

...

Doctor Figure/Aponia

The Body--
His mind--
Disconnected.
They can't seem to--
Find their way.
Stuck in an in-between.

(Lights fade on the Doctor Figure and the Mother Figure. Lights up on Whole Body/L)

scene ii

(While the Whole Body/L speaks, the Doctor Figure and the Mother Figure stand frozen. When he speaks out loud, it should be clear that it is in his comatose mind, and therefore no one, specifically the doctor and his mother, can hear him)

Whole Body/L

It was an Alice in Wonderland moment.
I remember from a while back--
The cartoon movie,
The long fall,
Her yellow blonde hair

Sweeping in the wind of her descend:
That's what it was like.

(Lights up on E stage left. She paces)

I see a figure far off.
 I keep seeing her.
 She's flustered,
 I can tell.
 Not where she wants to be.
 Sometimes I think about

The world being a big
 World of white, like in
 The movie
 "Coraline."
 Or in "Stranger Things:"

The underneath,
 A parallel world--
 But, different. Cold,
 White, empty, erasable.
 Evil?

That's where I am,
 And I think she's there too.
 Circles,
 It's all white--
 Stuck.

scene iii

(Lights go down on Whole Body/L as well as the Doctor Figure and the Mother Figure, but they are all still visible. Lights stay up on E)

E

I woke up in tangled sheets,
 A corner slipped from
 One edge of the bed
 And it lay crumpled

Under my pillow.

The shades were closed;
 I felt a strong
 Burst of morning sunlight waiting
 To be set free.
 I had the power of that freedom,
 To let the sunshine through,
 And I didn't let it
 Go.

Thoughts seeped through
 Like the bits of hidden sunlight:
 A loss of control.
 I felt helpless in how lost I was.
 How unfamiliar these sheets were,
 Why I still knew who I was,
 And didn't find the void
 To begin again.

(When E quotes Lucretius throughout the Act, Whole Body/L, always lying in the middle of the stage, sits up. He looks at E as she speaks the quote)

“This terror then, this darkness of the mind,
 Not sunrise with its flaring spokes of light,
 Nor glittering arrows of morning can disperse,
 But only Nature's aspect and her law”¹⁸

(Once E finishes quoting, L lays back down)

All I had was the sun.
 And at night,
 The moon.
 My only constants.
 I waited

For the moment
 You commit to standing,

¹⁸ “The Internet Classics Archive: On the Nature of Things by Lucretius.” The Internet Classics Archive, On the Nature of Things by Lucretius. Book 1, Beginning of section entitled “Substance is Eternal.” http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.html.

Commit to the cold
Floor beneath your feet.
Unless you're wearing socks.
Which I often do,
An extra cover
On those chilling,
Comforter up to your chin,
Winter nights.
When the sun

No longer waits
To greet me behind
Closed curtains.
The moon is more subtle

In her desire to be seen,
More patient.
Knowing she's there, invisible,
Is more enticing.
I had a dream,
Last night,

My heart was in my foot.
I watched it beat
Beneath my toes.
I awoke to a greeting

From darkness,
A sound of a faucet
In a far-off room,
And this time,
Dawn,
Where the sun and moon
Meet,
Switching places, for

(Whole Body/L sits up and looks at E)

"Hard upon ether came the origins

Of sun and moon, whose globes revolve in air
Midway between the earth and mightiest ether"¹⁹

(Whole Body/L lays back down)

The glow surrounding them:
An in-between.

scene iv

(Lights up on Whole Body/L. E and the Doctor Figure and the Mother Figure are not lit, but still visible. This pattern continues throughout the Act)

Whole Body/L

She comes in and out,
Sometimes a faint mist,
A dryad of crystal snow.

(Lights on the Whole Body/L fade)

scene v

(Lights up on E)

E

Day 4.
With other fallen atoms.

Location: unknown.
A purgatorial abyss.
Somewhere
In the void?
A corner? Where the "Swerve"
Doesn't reach.
Grey.
Never green.
Those are my words for it.
The best description

¹⁹ "The Internet Classics Archive: On the Nature of Things by Lucretius." The Internet Classics Archive. On the Nature of Things by Lucretius. Book 5, Beginning of section entitled "Formation of the World and Astronomical Questions." http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.html.

I can muster.
There are all different kinds
Of us.
Atoms.
All broken.

First falling,
Now fallen.

Scene vi

(Lights up on the Doctor Figure and the Mother Figure)

Doctor Figure/Aponia

Surgery.
Next steps.

Mother Figure/Ataraxia

You're certain?

Doctor Figure/Aponia

No other option.
He lays, eyes
Closed, no
Progress.

Mother Figure/Ataraxia

We can't wait a few more days?
Before surgery?

Doctor Figure/Aponia

Too risky.
To wait.
The window of
Time
Is closing,
Quickly.
The longer we wait, the further he goes
Into the depths of...wherever he is.

(Lights fade)

scene vii

(Lights up on E)

E

There's a lot of time to think here.

A lot of silence.

Alone silence.

I had some thoughts about

God.

There was a moment,

The other day,

Dreary, hot,

Claustrophobic in my thoughts.

I wanted to vanish,

Leave.

Find the pit again, scream

For the mirrors to come back.

Curse them for bringing me

Here.

Commit to a new beginning.

Get out

Of the in-between.

I turned to the sky

And asked.

Simply,

Please,

Any words I could cobble:

Guide me away.

Help me find the bottom.

(Whole Body/L sits up and looks at E)

"Solace of mortals and delight of gods,

Point out the course before me, as I race

On to the white line of the utmost goal,

That I may get with signal praise the crown,
With thee my guide!"²⁰

(Whole Body/L lays back down)

I never believed in God,
Or rather, that He
Wanted anything to do with me--
And there were reasons for that.
Ways in which I was taught,
Reasons I stick by;
It's better that way.
Easier.
I believe in coincidence--
Fate. I guess spirituality--
But, anyway---
When the end comes,
Death visits,
You know

Where you're going.
And you begin to
Love the idea of
Becoming a rain of dust
Coating the thirsty soil,
Joining the slow journey
Of a rooting tree.
Of something green.

(Whole Body/L sits up again, looks at E)

"What once sprung from the earth
Sinks back into the earth."²¹

²⁰ "The Internet Classics Archive: On the Nature of Things by Lucretius." The Internet Classics Archive. On the Nature of Things by Lucretius. Book 6, end of "Proem."
http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.html.

²¹ Carus, Titus Lucretius, and Rolfe Humphries. *Lucretius, the Way Things Are: the De Rerum Natura of Titus Lucretius Carus*. Book 2, Line 999. London: Indiana University Press, 1969.

“The atoms in it must be used
Over and over again; thus the death
Of one thing becomes necessary
For the birth of another.”²²

(Whole Body/L lays back down)

That’s okay with me.
I don’t need God to promise
Me heaven.

I looked to the sky—
Maybe I wasn’t talking directly
To God.
I don’t think I was.
But rather,
Something I Couldn’t See.
I asked these questions to
The clouds and
Hoped someone would hear me.
I realized then,

That because I asked,
Because I made eye contact with the
Immense indigo sky,
Some part of me
Must believe in something.

(Lights fade on E)

scene viii

(Lights up on the Mother Figure)

Mother Figure/Ataraxia

It’s been thundering for
5 days.
The sky, if it were human,

²² Carus, Titus Lucretius, and Frank O. Copley. *On The Nature of Things*. Page xvii. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.

Angry.
 My son lays comatose in
 A white empty room,
 Lost in himself.
 His favorite color was green.
 He surrounded himself with nature.
 The nature of things.
 All beings.
 Now, his surroundings,
 All artificial. Fluorescent.
 Never green.

(Whole Body/L sits up, looks at his mother)

“The scudding clouds crash into one another high
 Up in the ether when the winds are warring, for no sound
 Comes out of a clear patch of sky; but wherever clouds are found
 Mustered in thicker ranks, it’s from the corner that the rumbling
 Thunder’s usually more apt to mutter mighty grumbling.”²³

(Whole Body/L lays back down)

He used to contemplate these questions,
 Ask about the sky.

At midnight,
 When the streets empty
 And sleep falls upon us,
 Nature seems to scream:
 “Give me a BREAK!”
 The
 Winds are battling.
 5 days.
 Of wakeless sleep.
 Of waiting for
 His open eyes.

²³ Caro, Tito Lucrecio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 6, Lines 97-99. London: Penguin, 2007.

(Lights fade)

scene ix

(Lights up on E)

E

Today started off rainy and grey,
 As it always does,
 Never white, never black,
 Always grey—the in between color—
 No thunder, no lighting,
 No violence. But the threat,
 Always there. Anticipating a crash
 Of sound and a flash of angry light.
 But this time,

It was a comforting grey,
 One that keeps you cool in the midst of intense,
 Unfamiliarity and leaves
 A soft mist along your skin.
 We're asked to work--

Work brings us closer to
 Ourselves. Our hands in the ground--
 A relationship between
 Earth and Body. Reminds us
 Who we are.

The work is hard.
 Mainly outside labor.
 Planting, picking, weeding.
 Things that should be green,
 Colors of the earth.
 But there's a tint,
 A charcoal shadow.

I often find myself wanting a break,
 Tired, hungry, my hands--

I want minutes to pass quickly;
 I try to remind myself in those times:
 Feel the soil in your fingernails,
 Know, (pray), that it won't be there forever.
 Someday,

When you earn? your way out,
 You'll miss the smell of the earth on your skin.
 Grey as it may be.

The time after the work is my favorite,
 Sometimes
 Filled with belly laughs over
 The differences in our languages,
 Quiet reads,
 Silent dinners full of vegetables

Picked by our own hands.
 I'm not sure,
 How the vegetables grow,
 In the grey?
 The sunlight is weak

Behind the clouds.
 But some strand must peak through
 And give life to the underground.

Last night, sitting around the table,
 Atom #4
 (We don't have names)
 He asked me--

*(The same actor who played Atom #2 and Atom #3 enters and joins E. He is now, again,
 a different Atom)*

Atom #4

"What is your time of bliss?"

E

I loved that.
It was a deep, happy voice.
Hard to come by here.
It took me a moment
I stumbled, moved
By the combination of words,
Which, if you think about it,
Simply means:

Atom #4

“What makes you happy?”

E

I sat there, scrambling to think back to my life,
Up there.
Something that seemed so

Distant,
Unimportant,
In that moment.
All worry slipped
Away. Fleeting
Stuck in happy contemplation.
And then I remembered how much
I started hating it.
How the loneliness, helplessness
Crept in,
And my whole world,
Suddenly:
A black cloud.

(Turns to Atom #4)

What landed you here?

Atom #4

The same that landed you, most likely.

E

Did you think you'd go back to the beginning?
Back to the void?

Atom #4

At the time I didn't care. Anywhere but where I was.

E

I felt that, too. Anywhere else.
(Thinking for a moment)
Your question earlier--

Atom #4

(Thinking back)
"Time of Bliss?"

E

Yes, that.

Atom #4

(Waiting for E to say something)
...What about it?

E

I don't know. It made me think. Made me feel-- *(she can't find the words)*
What made you ask it?

Atom #4

Well, I guess I'm just searching.

E

Searching?

Atom #4

For my "Time of Bliss."

E

I see.

Atom #4

I feel I'm searching for a purpose, mainly.

Maybe that will lead to some form of happiness.
 I ask others,
 Hoping it will bring answers.

E

A reason to go back?
 To your--
 Previous "placement?"

Atom #4

(Laughing)

Is there a way back?
 And anyway, I'm not so sure
 I want to.

E

...
 I'd like to think there is.
 At first, I just wanted out.
 But I'm beginning to wonder
 Why I landed here.
 Why I didn't just begin again,
 Memory erased.
 Why I'm here with you.
 I wonder if there's a way back--
 If I'm supposed to go back--
 To my past "atomic role" or whatever
 One calls it.

Atom #4

Maybe.
(He becomes silent)

E

(Picking up on the fact that he may be uncomfortable)
 The way you phrased it.
 "Time of Bliss."
 How come?

Atom #4

Felix tempus.

E

Excuse me?

Atom #4

Felix tempus.

Time of Bliss.

Happiness.

Joy.

However one might translate it.

E

English:

It wasn't your first language?

Atom #4

Latin.

That was the best translation I could come up with.

Something about the word: "Bliss."

I liked it.

E

Latin.

You must...It's been a long time...

Since you got here?

How many years?

(Atom #4 remains silent)

(Lights fade. Atom #4 exits)

scene x

(Lights up on the Whole Body/L)

Whole Body/L

I can no longer

Taste it.

Smell the green.

It's slipping,
 Always rain.
 Loud claps of selfish thunder.
 Something--
 Missing.

(Lights fade)

scene xi

(Lights up on E)

E

Day 27.
 My mind is fragmented.
 Sentences scatter.

Field trip today.

The mountain--
 The one that sleeps
 Quietly,
 Existing loudly,
 Outside my window.

(Mocking the idea:)

A "nature walk."
 Meant to be an opportunity
 To "reflect," "contemplate."

It's the tall mountain.
 The one always covered by the clouds.
 Steep.

(Lights fade)

scene xii

(Lights up on the Mother Figure)

Mother Figure/Ataraxia

Still waiting.
 A broken record.
 Not sure,
 What I have left
 To say that I haven't
 Already said.
 Now there's just a constant
 Drizzle outside my window.
 A slow crawling flood,
 Flooded are:
 My hopeless walks home
 From the hospital,
 Not only on the pavement,
 But in the burrows of my
 Mind.

(Whole Body/L sits up and looks at his mother)

"Therefore, as I said,
 The storm must be conceived as over our head
 Towering most high; for never would the clouds
 Overwhelm the lands with such a massy dark,
 Unless up-builed heap on lofty heap,
 To shut the round sun off. Nor could the clouds,
 As they come, engulf with rain so vast
 As thus to make the rivers overflow
 And fields to float, if ether were not thus
 Furnished with lofty-piled clouds."²⁴

(Whole Body/L lays back down)

I like to pretend to think
 The thoughts he'd think.

Memories of the sun.
 Of him, awake.

²⁴ "The Internet Classics Archive: On the Nature of Things by Lucretius." The Internet Classics Archive, On the Nature of Things by Lucretius. Book 6, halfway through the section entitled "Great Meteorological Phenomena, etc." http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.html.

A golden glow on his curious face.
 They fade.
 I have a confession I'd like
 To make,
 And it's taken--
 Well,
 This event,
 This disconnect
 Between me and him,
 To--
 Well, say.
 A kind of neglect.
 I wasn't there,
 Really.
 In his younger years,
 Absent.
 His father, too.
 Never--
 There.

(Lights fade)

scene xiii

(Lights up on E)

E

Our hike began in a forest
 Of silver-barked trees glistening
 Like polished tin in a still-rising sun.
 A morning light shown fiercely down

Through the leaves and hit the bark
 So perfectly, it paved a subtle metallic light
 Over the crumbling dirt.

Me and Atom #4
 Walked side by side,
 Silent,
 As was asked of us.

I've latched on to him,
A companion,
No longer as alone.
But he's stuck it seems.
In this indescribable place.
Comfortable here.
Wherever "here" is.
A dangerous thought.
To be comfortable.
In this nowhere.
A quick
Quicksand.

The whole time we walked I made
Up stories in my head.
Maybe this trip would lead to a way out.
Or maybe, at least,
Some kind of test.
A way to show progress.
A hint at change.

The summit was beautiful. We were surrounded
By tall mossy mountains. Us, tiny atoms,
Who look up into the sky and admire the far-off tips of mountains,
Were now on the same level, standing
Amongst the clouds.
White, soft mist engulfed us;
We felt protected,
And temporarily,
A part of the sky.

We layed in a circle,
Heads softy meeting.

Looking up at the sky,
Feeling
The brightness close our eyes.
Seeing the sun beneath our
Eyelids—

The way it creeps through
 And leaves an orange glow
 No matter how tight
 They shut.

We begin.
 A simulation.

(E lays down and looks up at the sky. There is some shift in the lighting, just like in the opening of the play with the scene between Atom #1 and Atom #2, that indicates we are entering into the mind of E for this "simulation." The Mother Figure and Doctor Figure exit. The lights begin to slowly go up on the Whole Body/L in order to highlight their connection to one another)

I re-entered the silver forest
 In my closed eyes.
 The clouds engulfed me more.
 I felt them wrap around me. Encase me.
 The trees still shimmered in my mind,
 Now a darker,
 More golden glow in a later,
 Afternoon sun.
 The trees were greener
 In this dream.

Letting my
 Unconsciousness take
 Control.
 The grass, beneath,
 Carrying me.
 Reality began to drift
 Further and further away.

Tickled, with a momentary
 Shiver, an accusatory sky
 Gazed with cloudless pupils,
 And tangled in the grass, I woke
 To a soft pinky grazing
 My elbow.

Atom #4.

His eyes were closed. He gazed at
His own sky, different from mine,
In his own world, his own simulation.
And I smiled,
Knowing he was in another place,
Maybe I was there with him
In his world,
Maybe I wasn't,
But he was in mine and it made me happy.

Why was he here with me?
I wondered because I thought I'd enter
This world alone.
This was the first thought I had.

I stared, for a moment,
At his weightless limbs,
An occasional twitch, his pupils
Clearly chasing something
Only he could see.
What troubles has he faced?
They must be so foreign from mine.
Ancient.
Right out of those history books.
Is he home in Rome,
(That's where they spoke Latin?)
Fleeing
The wrath of a lofty leader,
Writing poems to a girl he loved?

I thought about what I felt for him.
I thought about his lips,
If I'm being honest.
And then,

(The Whole Body/L begins to slowly thrash on the ground. He makes soft unidentifiable sounds)

My mind was distracted, quickly,
 By a far-off sound, and like
 A thirsty animal, I quickly
 Searched for the source,
 Leaving him laying softly, not
 Realizing he'd slowly fade into the grass
 In my absence.

(E begins to wander the stage and look for where the sound is coming from. The Whole Body/L still thrashes)

scene xiv

(The Whole Body/L now speaks clearly and begins to narrate E's movements)

Whole Body/L

Once sleeping,
 Breathing like fire,
 She ran.

(E continues to wander the stage. The Whole Body/L continues to watch)

Around her
 Was a world of white,
 A world erased.

(The "simulation" is really beginning now)

E

Where is that coming from?
 I've seen this before.
 The person hears something,
 It isn't there.
 Conclusion: they're crazy.
 They've lost it.
 Sight of reality.
 Years and years spent
 Chasing
 The sound of--

(The Whole Body/L finally stands. This is a dream sequence where E and L finally meet and connect. They stand on opposite sides of the stage, not recognizing one another)

Whole Body/L

(Yelling)

Hello?

HELP! HELP!

Is anybody there?

E

(Trying to find where the sound is coming from)

Hello? Yes, I'm here! Where are you?

Whole Body/L

I'm over here! I'm so lost.

Please, somebody, help me.

(E finally finds the Whole Body/L. The Whole Body/L stands frantic, terrified. Because E is an atom, we must imagine that she is very small compared to the Whole Body/L. This does not need to be depicted on stage, but rather imagined by the audience)

E

Are you alright? What's going on?

Wow, you're very tall.

Whole Body/L

And you, awfully small.

E

Well, I'm just an atom.

I'm supposed to be small.

The smallest of the small, really.

And you?

Whole Body/L

An atom? *Atom?*

I've never met an atom. A single atom?

I must be going absolutely insane.

(Suddenly frantic)

Where are we? I've been wandering,
Aimlessly, for so long.
This white,
Then darkness.

(He can barely get the words out)

What's your name?
It's so good to finally see someone,
Speak to someone.
Even if you're only an atom.

E

I'm E.
I'm not exactly sure where we are?
A forest, I think.
We'll find a way out.

Whole Body/L

Are you lost too?

E

I think so.
Maybe not in the way you are?
Lost in my mind, it seems.
I'm supposed to be "reflecting?"
Thinking about why it is that I
Abandoned my past.
I'm a part of this atom rehabilitation group?
Maybe that's also where
You're supposed to be?

Whole Body/L

That can't be right.
I'm not an atom?
(Thinking very deeply)
Your voice.
So familiar.

E

Oh, um...Maybe we've met?
Where are you coming from?

Whole Body/L

Something is seriously wrong
With me.
Something isn't right.

E

What do you mean?

Whole Body/L

I'm asleep?
I haven't been able to wake up.
I hear these voices...
A doctor, I think?
And then, my mother?
Which is surprising--
She was never--
Around. I learned to
Reject
Any...form of attachment,
Any sign of...trusting...Anyway--
There was also this girl, on the other side,
She was always contemplating--
Something.
I'm stuck somewhere in between.
I might have hit my head?
I can't seem to remember what happened.
But I'm disconnected from the world--
Alone, drifting.

E

I'm so sorry. That sounds terrible.
I wish I could help you find your way.

Whole Body/L

(Pondering, realizing)

I really--
I think you're the girl.
The one I keep seeing.
You're clearer
In my eyes, now.

E

Oh, I don't think so--
I don't see how?

Whole Body/L

It seems impossible.
I don't know, I really think--
Your eyes. They're sad.
I recognize them.
I can't be sure. The girl,
She was always far off--
Blurry, distant.

E

Hmm.
Tell me about your life,
About what you remember.

Whole Body/L

Well, it's fuzzy.
I've been out of touch for a while.
But, I was writing, I think.
A book? I'd get lost in these
Scenes in my head.
I spent most of my life alone,
But not this
Kind of alone.
Lost in my thoughts.
Married to my work.

E

Writing a book!

What was it about?

Whole Body/L

(Thinking for a moment)

The nature of things,
Is the best way to put it.
How the world works.
Our existence within
A larger universe.
I know that sounds broad.
That's all I can really remember.

E

It sounds fascinating.

Whole Body/L

What about you?
Tell me something
About you.

E

(Also taking a moment, trying to find the words to describe what's going on in her head)

Well, it's hard to explain.
My memory, too, feels a little fuzzy.
Being here, wherever we are, wasn't my plan.
I was once a part of someone's unconscious mind.
A small atom within the brain stem.
The feeling of love was my primary placement.
I thought of other things too, though.
They'd creep in.
Deep things. Death, sometimes.
I'd get caught easily in the weight of it all.
Heavy all the time--
Sad.
My person, the larger being, he never listened.
He claimed he did.
He even claimed to "contemplate" the things I thought.
He wasn't in touch. Closed off. A know-it-all.
I jumped, left.
Wanted to start fresh.

I was swept away by something when I jumped--
 This sound, this wind.
 Taken here.

Whole Body/L

That wind you described--
 It sounds like this thing...I'm trying to remember.
 The "Swerve."
(Remembering more)
 Within the void.
 One of the main focuses of my book.

E

(Recognizing that word)
 I know the "Swerve!"

Whole Body/L

(Changing the subject)
 I don't really--Believe
 In "love."
 I believe we have the power
 To stop it.
 And we should!
(They're both quiet. E is momentarily confused. L clarifies:)
 You mentioned that was your "primary placement."
 Any time I feel it, I tell myself it's dangerous.
 That it's overpowering. Distracting.
 Eventually, it fades.

E

Neither did he.
 "Believe in love."
 The brain I was a part of.
 I mean,
 The more I've thought about it,
 I'm not sure I "believe in it,"
 Either.
 I hate that phrase:
 "Believe in love."

Cheesy bullshit.
 But the sensations,
 The reactions,
 The surging
 Ferocity.
 Those are real. I have to
 Believe in that.
 But anyway,
 That's why I left. I didn't
 Matter.

Whole Body/L

Of course you mattered.
 Every brain cell matters.
 Every
 Atom.
 As soon as you're gone,
 Everything:
 Thrown off.
(Pause)
 I struggled with that.
 Listening.
 My own
 Voice-- that's all I cared
 To hear.

E

There's still time.
 To listen?
 There's got to be.

Whole Body/L

I don't think so.
 I'm beginning to realize--
 I don't think I'm getting out of
 Here.
 This place.
(E remains silent, not sure what to say)
 You can cause harm, you know.

E

What do you mean by that?

Whole Body/L

By leaving. Abandoning your place within the brain.
When you leave, all surrounding atoms are affected.
Everything--
Shifts. Rearranges.
It's a risky business.

E

(Thinking about that long and hard)

I had no idea.
I thought it
Wouldn't matter.
I wanted to go back to the void and start again.
They persuaded me. These voices.

Whole Body/L

The void,
Where atoms fall like
"Drops of rain."²⁵
I also talked about that in my book.

E

Wait--
Say that again.

Whole Body/L

What? "Drops of rain?"

E

The brain I was a part of,
He used to say that all the time--

²⁵ Caro, Tito Lucrecio, A. E. Stallings, and Richard Jenkyns. *The Nature of Things*. Book 2, Line 220. London: Penguin, 2007.

(Atom #4 enters and shakes E awake out of the "simulation." The Whole Body/L freezes for a moment, and then goes back to center stage and lays back down on the ground)

Atom #4

E, c'mon it's time to go.
Wake up!

E

(Very startled)
Oh, woah. Sorry...I uhh--
I was having this, um,
Conversation. He was
Lost. I wasn't
Sure how to help--

Atom #4

We couldn't wake you for the longest time.
Who?
Was lost?

E

(Deeply confused, making a realization)
I think I have to--
I have to go back.

Atom #4

What?

E

(A bit frantic)
Go back. To my past role.
Atomic--placement--whatever.
I don't know. Maybe I'm crazy--
Completely insane--
But--
I think I might
Have caused--
Problems.
Harmful problems.
I'm not sure, but I met someone--In the dream--

Just now.
 He spoke like him--
 But different--
 He seemed to have learned--
 God I can't articulate anything.
 It's hard to--

Atom #4

E that was just a dream.
 Just a time to reflect.
 I've been through this
 Exercise a million times.
 It's nothing.
 Take a breath.
 Calm down.

E

No no no, you don't understand.
 My person--
 The larger being--
 "L."
 He used to be this--
 Monster.
 In my mind.
 But--
 I think something happened to
 His brain.
 Or something.
 Because I--
 Jumped. The mirrors!
 It's my fault--
 That he's there.
 Stuck. A white darkness--
 Always lost,
 ...Searching!

Atom #4

"White darkness?"
 E, you need to take a moment.

This isn't making sense.

E

A way out.

Yes! A way out.

Do you know one?

You must know one! You've been here for so long.

Years and years. An eternity,

For God's sake!

I know you know.

Atom #4

E, I have no idea what you're talking about.

You know how long I've been here.

Don't you think I would have tried?

E

There has to be a way out!

If we're brought here.

To this in-between.

There has to be a way back.

To the void.

Dammit, we can't

Be stuck. God, we can't

Be stuck.

(Atom #4 pauses for a moment. He knows something)

You know something.

I knew you'd know. If you know--

Don't you dare hide it from me.

Atom #4

(Pause)

...There's a...well.

E

What? A well? What kind of well?

Atom #4

Yes, a well. A--a portal of sorts.

To--

The void? Out of this

Pocket at least.

This corner. This place

Where the "Swerve" never comes.

I think you can enter back--

By jumping into its water.

Into your reflection. Almost like a mirror

Of water?

I've heard it described that way--

But I have no idea if it actually wor--

E

Take me! We have to go.

Whatever it is, it's

Hope.

Change. There's been

So little of that. Here--

It's stagnant. Flat.

Don't you crave it? Change! A chance!

A fight.

C'mon!

Atom #4

E! Hold on a minute. I have no idea if it's true.

It's only based on--

Hearsay.

It could be a dangerous pit that leads--

Nowhere. Another

Corner. More grey.

Maybe even darker--

Black. You won't be able to see--

E

What have I got to

Lose?

I can't be stuck here.

I can't. I've been stuck
Before. Caught in
The nets of my sadness.
Despair. All the discouraging words.
Nothing is
Worse than that.
I'll fight when I'm back--
Scream. Try--
I can't live quiet
In purgatory.

Atom #4

...

E

PLEASE.

Atom #4

(Thinking deeply)

Okay,
Okay.

E

Thank you.

Atom #4

...Wait.

E

What?

Atom #4

You could stay.
Listen--

E

No.

Atom #4

Just think about it. We can stay here.
We have each other.
I've grown to--

E
--What?

Atom #4
I've grown to--
We have each other.
It's comfortable here. Safe.
Easy!

E
It's grey. All the time.
I miss the green.

Atom #4
No real responsibilities!
Just atoms, as they're meant to be--
On their own. Not forced into anything.
Not trying so hard to fulfill
Any role. Just existing.

E
I couldn't live with myself.
(Taking a moment)
Come with me.

Atom #4
I couldn't.

E
Come with me. Seriously.

Atom #4
We'd be separated as soon as we jumped.

E

But...Maybe if I
Held on to
Your han--

Atom #4

No. You and I both know--
That wouldn't work.

E

(Pause)

Everytime I feel something for some--
It never works. It--
For God's sake. Take the leap--
You've been stuck. So long.

(Atom #4 remains silent)

Take me there.
Please.

scene xv

(E and Atom #4 look at each other for a moment. Finally, Atom #4 gestures backstage, and they exit stage right. The stage is left empty for a moment with only the Whole Body/L lying there. Then, Atom #4 and E enter from stage left. We have to imagine a well in the middle of the stage, behind the Whole Body/L)

Atom #4

This is it. The well.

(E peers down the imaginary well)

E

It looks deep.
(Yelling down into the well)
Hello! *(her "hello" echos)*

(Pause. She looks over at Atom #4)
You and me.

Atom #4

No, I can't.

I think--
I'm meant to stay.

E

Please?
I don't think you're "meant to stay."
I don't think anyone is "meant to stay."
I think it's all supposed to be--
Temporary.
(Pause)
I don't want to do it alone.

Atom #4

E. *(pause)*
No. I'm--
I'm happy here.

E

(Taking this in)
Well-- *(searching for the words)*
I'm happy to have met you.
I won't forget.

Atom #4

I'm afraid you might.
I don't know how it all works.
(Pause)
I'm happy to have met you, E.
For as long as I'm here--
I certainly won't forget you.
That's for sure.
Good luck.
I hope you find the green.
In the off chance you were to
Come back--

E

(Shaking her head)
Me being here,
Meeting you,

It was--
 Fate.
 What I needed at that moment,
 In my life.
 But, it was an aligning of stars,
 A lucky--
 Chance.
 I don't think I'll be back.
 I got what I needed from
 This place.
 I'm not sure I could find my way back,
 Even if I wanted to.

Atom #4

Listen for the wind--
 The "Swerve." It'll
 Carry you...

(E smiles at Atom #4. She then looks down at the well. We hear the familiar sound of gushing wind. She swings her arms to jump and there is a quick black out. Lights go back up momentarily:)

Scene xvi

E

I felt this
 Sudden transformation--
 A growth of wings,
 A propelling
 Out of a cocoon,
 The freedom I felt:
 A freedom seen only
 When birds hover
 Softly over the ocean.

I saw them all--
 In the mirrors,
 The water,
 My Body, Soul,
 Ataraxia, Aponia,

Together-- they were one
 Picture. All-- in partnership.
 Then L:
 A look of--
 Defeat? But happy--
 Learned. Ready
 For change. Hard to
 Articulate--
 Different. It was different.

It was inhabited by
 An atom--this freedom--
 Me.
 And a willingness
 To submit to momentary
 Flight, a partnership
 With a gusting wind,
 Blowing soft sweeps of life
 Into my lungs.

(Blackout)

(Lights up. The Whole Body/L is now standing. The Doctor Figure and the Mother Figure enter from stage right and the lights turn to them for a moment. The Mother Figure steps forward. L and her look at each other for a moment and acknowledge each other in some way--either a nod or smile, something of that sort)

scene xvii

(The characters speak simultaneously, next to each other, to show they are one)

E AND L AND ATARAXIA AND Aponia

Genetrix of Rome, alma Venus,
 I stand before you--the moon, my only company.
 A tame wind rustles
 The trees, soft goosebumps
 paint my arms.
 I have entered a grove of thought--
 An orchard of contemplation.
 And I look to you, my dear Venus,

For guidance as I ponder
De Rerum Natura.
(To Ataraxia and Aponia:)
 Alright you two,
 I think I can
 Take it from here.

Ataraxia

(To Aponia)
 I never thought I'd see the day!

(L smiles and laughs. Ataraxia and Aponia exit stage left. L waves goodbye to them)

L

I published the book, finally.
 Something was always--
 Not quite--
 There. A piece--
 The puzzle-- lost.
 Even though I don't,
 Myself,
 Wish to give in to it's wrath,
 It's there. Acknowledged,
 Listened to--
 Heard.
 Don't make me say the word. *(L smiles at the audience)*

scene xviii

(E stands next to L, but speaks alone to the audience. She has a new "aura" about her. Proud in her taking control)

E

I was walking down the street,
 The streets that make up my home,
 Blobs of gum stuck on the sidewalk
 Like splashes of black paint.

 I wish I knew how many footsteps had
 Come in contact with the gum,

How many footsteps it took for the pink
Or the blue to fade,
To turn black.
To become one with the pavement.
I'm walking by a school.
An elementary school with a jungle gym
Surrounded by small clusters of chalk illustrations.
A city, often green-less.
Grey concrete, silver pavement.

A pigeon flies low in the sky,
It seems to embody a
Familiar freedom.

I look down and I see a piece of construction paper,
Strewn about with broken glass
And soda cans,
Somehow it escaped its trash bag,
Somehow it wanted still to be seen--
White in color,
Written on it,
In green,
"The Green Poem."
A different kind of green.

There was no poem,
No words other than those three.
But they were the poem,
They are this play.

BLACKOUT. END OF PLAY.

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