

Mind Games

A collection of gamepoems
by Mikayla Roberts

Preface

Up until just a few months ago, I had never even heard the term “gamepoem”. Was it a game written in poem form, or a playable poem, as the name implies? Was it equal parts “game” and “poem”, or more one than the other? I would soon come to find out that these were all valid interpretations, among a seemingly never-ending list of others. It’s a term that’s difficult to define due to the diversity of the forms that it may take; even one of the creators of the term, Harry Josephine Giles, admits that they are not entirely sure what a gamepoem is. However, her article “Gamepoems: A Primer” provides some examples that beautifully and concisely illustrate the concept:

A gamepoem might describe an absurd scenario that’s fun to imagine; it might awkwardly gamify an everyday experience in a way that’s meaningful; it might be a parodic set of instructions; it might give rules to follow that result in revelatory experiences; it might be contained within a moment or a lifetime.

Since being introduced to gamepoems, I have been particularly fascinated by their absurdity. As a game designer, I am accustomed to making games that are meant to be played; the format of a gamepoem, however, invites the exploration of surreal rulesets that may or may not be possible to execute in reality. This impossibility is a major part of their charm. You could spend hours exploring the possible outcomes

of a proposed scenario, limited only by your imagination. You might even stumble upon some sort of revelation—about yourself, or the designer, or life in general—along the way. Gamepoems have expanded my understanding of what a “game” can be, and equipped me with new tools for crafting player experiences that are evocative, engaging, and unique. They have taught me that the form of a game is just as important as its content, and have encouraged me to continue to experiment with how I choose to present my work.

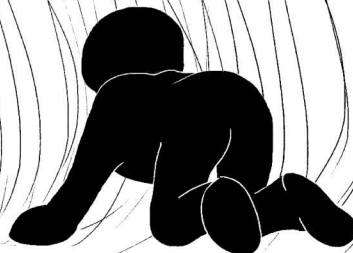
This book is a collection of my attempts at utilizing the absurdity of gamepoems, accompanied by illustrations to aid in visualizing how they may play out. You may attempt to act them out in real life, but they are best played within the safety of your imagination. The imagery and scenarios that you envision as you read them may be entirely different from mine, and that is completely fine! In fact, it is encouraged in order to get the most out of the experience.

I made this work during a period in which I was spending a lot of time trapped in my own head—it’s difficult not to get caught up in your own thoughts when you’ve been cooped up inside for over a year. I see these gamepoems as a way to give intent and direction to those thoughts in order to avoid getting pulled into harmful and reductive thought patterns. I hope that they can provide a similar intention for you, or at least put a smile on your face.

Enjoy!

A game for people that are stuck

Crawl into a hole so deep
you're not sure if you'll
ever make it back out.



Find a cozy spot
and hibernate for
one week.



Dream of your
ideal world



Live an entire
lifetime in this world

You may live as yourself,
or as a you that is
completely reinvented.



You may live as
something else entirely,



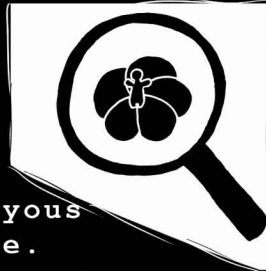
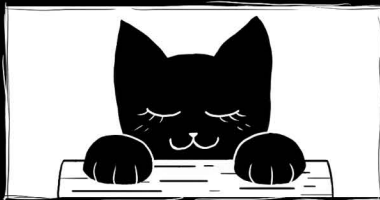
Like a ladybug



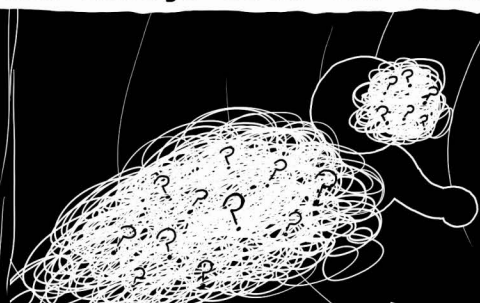
or a being of
your own creation



You may explore many different yous
until you find the perfect one.



When you awaken from this world
and emerge from the hole,



re-enter your former world
as whichever version of you
feels right.

A game for flashy ghosts

You are a ghost haunting
your own home.



Create minor
inconveniences for the
inhabitants by moving
things around...



...making ghostly
noises at odd hours of
the night...



...floating uncomfortably
close to them, etc.



Anyone that tries to convince you that you are not a ghost is wrong,



and probably in denial about their own ghostliness



Help them see their true self.



The game is complete once everyone in the home has accepted this reality.



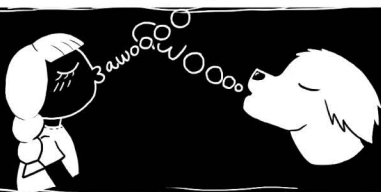
A game for people with noisy pets

The next time your pet



etc. at you,

return the favor,
but slightly louder.



If they respond,
get even noiser.



Repeat until one of you admits defeat.



Thanks for playing!