

ANACHRONIC STAMP

PRODUCTION MANUAL

WHAT IF MEMO RIES HAD EXP IRATION DATES



What would happen if suddenly one had the power to control their memories? Being able to determinate their expiration date?



The Production Manual depicts the whole process behind *Anachronic Stamp* — a design project which speculates upon the possibility of selecting and erasing memories, thus exploring the human obsession and the boundaries between memory and identity — the final assignment of the bachelor in Communication Design at Lisbon's Faculty of Fine Arts.

FIRST INSTALLMENT MONOLOGUE

The first installment discloses the setting of this fiction as a departure from Wong Kar-wai's *Chungking Express*. It establishes its main underlying ideas and its structure and timeline, and reveals the character's vision of his own path of discovering and unconsciously destroying his own identity, through the monologues.

ADAPTATION

SYNOPSIS

STRUCTURE

TIMELINE

MONOLOGUES

NOTE

ON THE LOCKEAN MEMORY THEORY
OF PERSONAL IDENTITY



ADAPTATION

The starting point of the project is the process of adaptation of a movie — fiction generating fiction. Delving into cinema and its creative mechanisms, we seek to understand and experience how fiction can inform design. *Chungking Express* is thus the movie which set the foundation of the project.

Chungking Express, the 1994 film by the Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-wai, distinctly captures the human obsession and is particularly immersed in the passage of time.

The concept behind this adaptation of Wong War wai's work builds itself around the idea that memories might have expiration dates — a thought presented by one of the main characters of the film: He Zhiwu, Cop 223.

Aided by a mournful voice-over narration, Cop 223 recurrently gives significance to dates and numbers in a film where time is a clear object of obsession. Driven by an idea of reconciliation with May, his recent ex-girlfriend, he begins a quest of buying almost-expired cans of pineapple — cans with an expiration date of May 1st, which is also the date of his birthday.

He, therefore, tells the spectator: *if May hasn't changed her mind by the time I've bought thirty cans, then our love will also expire.* Later in the film he also manifests the yearn to hold a memory eternally: *If memories ever come in a can, I hope that can never expires. If it has to have a shelf life, I hope it's 10,000 years.*

Bearing in mind the film's adaptation, another fundamental aspect is the characters' sense of alienation and dreaminess: they move about immersed in their peculiar thoughts and reveries paying no mind to their surroundings, almost as if floating. While they all remain in their self-contained universes, following the laws of desire and their eccentric paths in pursuit of an elusive state of happiness, Wong is able to invade the film's idiosyncratic character's fantasies — in virtue of his singular dazzling, fluid and experimental style. Voice-over narrations become devices that are able to display the characters' emotions and thoughts. Therefore, we likewise intend to make use of the monologue with the aim of delving into our lead character's mind.



SYNOPSIS

Anachronic Stamp speculates upon the possibility of selecting and erasing memories. On the intersection of design and fiction, this project explores the human obsession and the boundaries between memory and identity by focusing on only one character, understanding his hardships, his decisions to erase certain memories and the intrinsic consequences of this process.

In this fiction, the leading character craves for a world in which all the darkness in his life no longer exists, aiming bliss and serenity. In pursuance of this wish, he starts to decree expiration dates for all the negative memories he encounters. Being able to select and erase these memories, he becomes his own god, capable to manipulate his reality and thus live in a nostalgic time, this unreal world he imagines - where there are no harmful experiences and everything appears to be a utopia. At first, living in this world seems like genuinely living for the first time, but later, the leading character falls into a void of emptiness. His identity is taken and distorted by all the repudiated memories. He is no longer living. There's no past, present or future. Just emptiness.





STRUCTURE

The fiction was initially built following a three-part structural model, adapted from the organizational scheme of the ancient Greek drama.

PART 1 (PROTASIS)

Tired of reminiscing the same negative and haunting memories, living a life bound by an endless sadness, the main character decides to erase these memories and combat its consequential adverse feelings so he is able to start a new and free life. As these yearnings and decisions are fruitful, he finds himself in a brand new and exciting man-made reality. Full of possibilities and hope, he rejoices his newfound freedom and urge to live life to the fullest without the shackles of his own mind.

PART 2 (EPITASIS)

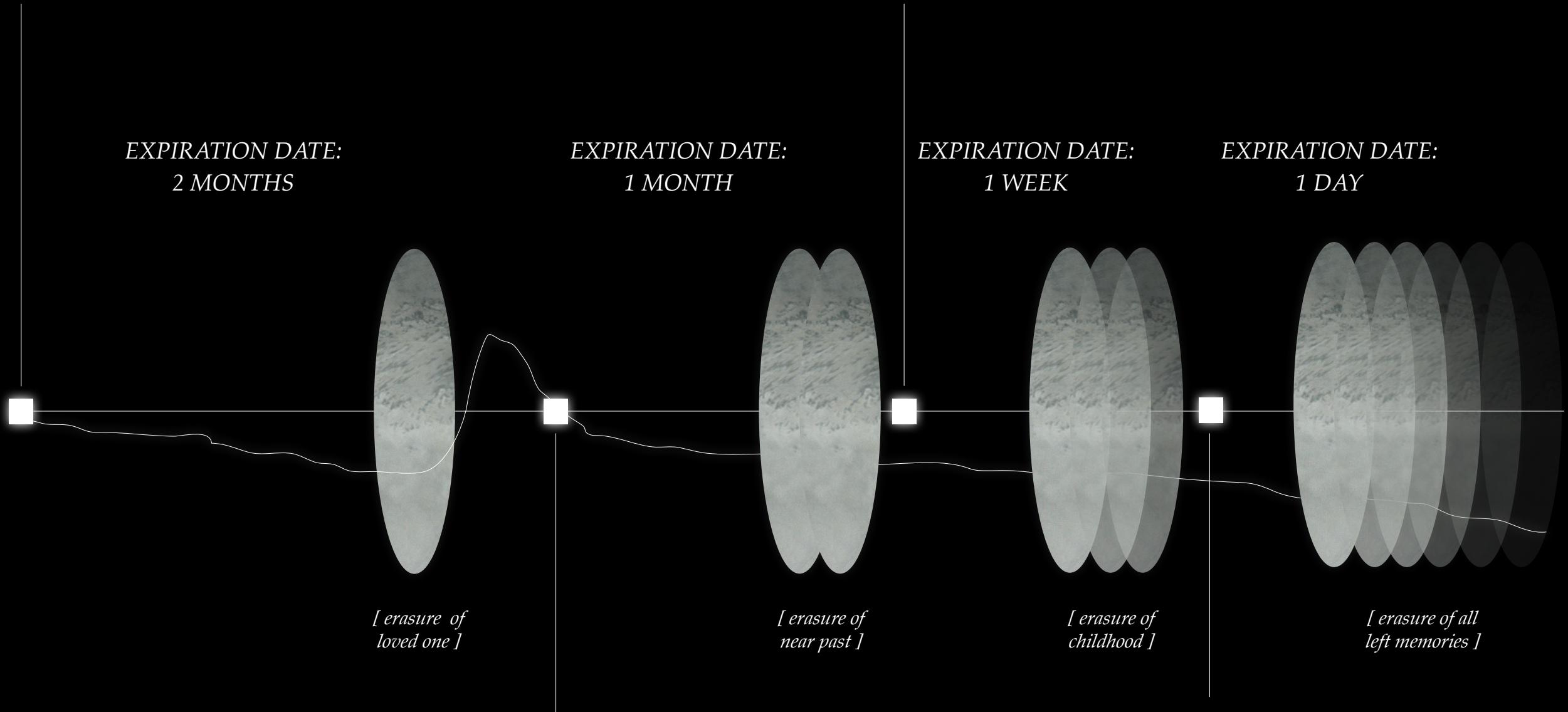
As his new sense of happiness starts to slowly fade away, obsession and restlessness take its place. No longer bound by the memories that afflicted him, having no recollection of the process of erasing them, new memories take the place of the old ones. The main character starts to contemplate the erasure of these memories, not being aware that he had done this before.

PART 3 (CATASTROPHE)

As the cycles of erasure become more frequent and demanding, otherwise positive labelled memories cease to be sufficiently satisfactory. Finding and attributing faults and errors to an ever-growing number of recollections, the main character finds himself being increasingly and subsequently hollowed out. Losing his references and consequently his personality, he starts to lose his sense of reality.

Pining for a love that is never reciprocated, the character finds himself obsessing about it, letting it dominate the narrative of his every day. Not wanting to live tormented by these thoughts, he decides to set an expiration date to every memory pertaining to his loved one. Still holding some optimism, the date is set at two months.

By disengaging from these spaces, he is left with his childhood memories. Nostalgia for this period of time starts to manifest in conjunction with the resurgence of some repressed memories. As he is unable to retrieve these long-gone days, he decides to eliminate the memories by establishing an expiration date.



The only thing tying the character to his current place of living was the desired relationship with his love interest. As these memories are eliminated, a nostalgia regarding his past creeps in. Feeling disconnected from his surroundings and of the people he is in contact with, only pressures him to ruminate more and more about their past. Striving for happiness and serenity, he decides to attach an expiration date to his memories of a near past.

The previous cycles of erasure leave him in a state of alienation, which leads to a life of isolation and complete dissociation from reality. Having no frames of reference, his identity is increasingly fragmented. As he attaches himself to the dwindling elements of his core, he begins to over-analyze them. Thus, a discomfort towards the remaining parts of his personality and behaviour arises, so he starts to attach expiration dates to them. A state of haziness ensues as he loses control of the erasure process, which is instigated ever more frequently and thoughtlessly.

SCENE

1



THE LEADING CHARACTER SEEKS AN EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT WITH ANOTHER THAT NEVER COMES TO FRUITION, WHICH STARTS A LONG PERIOD OF SADNESS IN HIS LIFE. THIS IS THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS FICTION'S THEME, IN WHICH HE REFLECTS ON HOW HE FEELS AND ANNOUNCES THE DECISION TO FIGHT THAT DARKNESS, BY ESTABLISHING AN EXPIRATION DATE FOR ALL THE MEMORIES RELATED TO THE PERSON HE IS OBSESSED WITH.



Darkness and brightness have always lived together. Just like the moon and the sun need each other, darkness needs brightness. They are complementary, interconnected and interdependent. And it used to be like this since the very beginning.



Then I saw you and everything started shaking. At first it was something good. Your presence, even if distant, filled a hole in me that I didn't even know that existed. All the lights shine and the darkness dances along. But I started needing more. For the first time, giving you all my time wasn't enough for me. I needed one second, just one glimpse of your beautiful eyes directed to me. It never happened and once I realized it would never happen, the shadows started spreading like cancer in me. Now, the darkness is filling my body and infecting everything in me. It's hard to see the light of the day when the clouds are too heavy. I look at the mirror and don't see the reflection I used to see.

As long as darkness exists, it will never be tamed and it will keep draining like lava, burning everything it goes through and extinguishing all signs of light in me. My desire is to live in a world where brightness doesn't have to be scared to be covered by darkness. To live in a world where you can't haunt me in my own thoughts.



By tomorrow, all my memories of you will expire. You will no longer exist and with you, darkness will disappear and I'll let the light in, starting a new world where I can feel peace.

SCENE

2



AS THE BURDEN OF THE NEGATIVE MEMORIES THAT HAUNTED THE MAIN CHARACTER IS LIFTED OFF, A NEW WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES IS OPENED UP TO HIM. AS HE TRIES TO GRASP THIS NEW REALITY, AN IMMENSE SENSE OF LIBERATION AND A SLEW OF NEW, POSITIVE AND STRANGE EMOTIONS FALL UPON HIM.

As if I woke up from a long deep slumber, my eyes seemed to not want to open. As I get a hold of myself and my surroundings, I sense a substantial shift in my center of gravity.

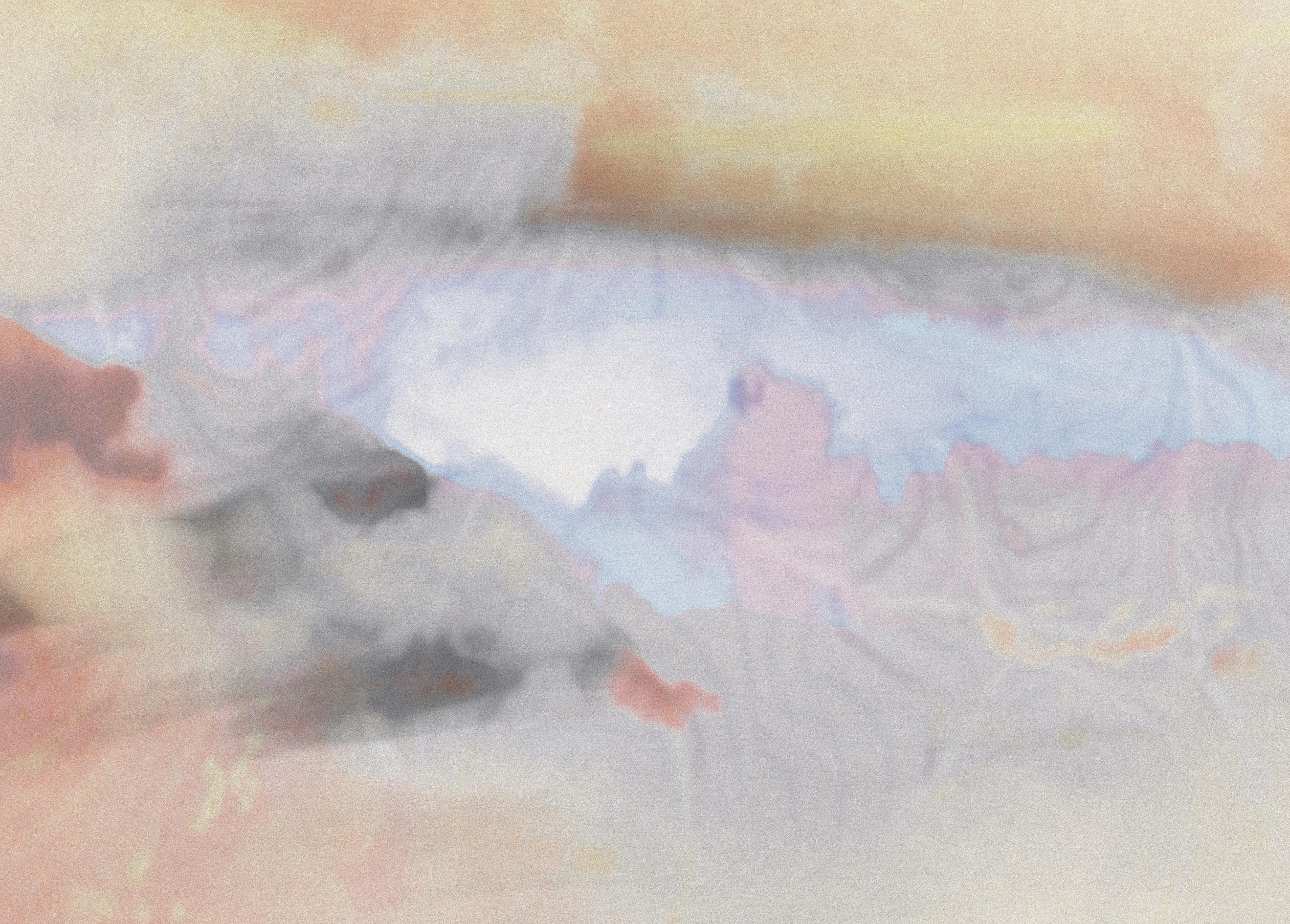


Something is out place or missing, but I don't feel unbalanced. In fact, I feel light, as if I just inhaled a good amount of fresh air on top of a scenic mountain. Where is that feeling of weight that I used to drag on through life? Where is all that extra baggage? At least I think I used to feel different, I'm not quite sure.

I don't remember ever encountering these feelings, I lost something, but I don't remember what. I think nothing happened... Everything seems to be the same, the sun is up and all is in its right position. This is so strange but at the same time so.... I don't know.... What do I feel? A sense of liberation, of boundless happiness and freedom? It's all so new, so refreshing, a new light shines upon me. Where there used to be blades of sorrow and pain, that lacerated my insides on each step I took, now prevails a softness and a hunger to do something with my life.



A newfound yearning to wake up, feel the breeze and the sunshine upon me, and for once do what I always craved, fulfill all that I wished to achieve, but couldn't find the strength and drive to accomplish. These unique feelings that I ached every day for, and never conceived I would, at last, encounter within me. I'm in a state of disbelief. It's as if my life started only just now as if I was never truly here until this moment. I am alive, finally.



SCENE

3



THE LEADING CHARACTER IS NO LONGER OVERJOYED. RESTLESSNESS CREEPS IN AND WHAT WAS ONCE PEACEFUL GIVES RISE TO DISQUIET. CONFUSION ARISES AND HE QUESTIONS WHETHER OR NOT A NEW CYCLE OF ERASURE SHOULD BEGIN. THERE IS STILL A POSSIBILITY TO REACH OUT PERFECTION, AND THAT IS WHAT IS ULTIMATELY AIMED. THE SCENE BEGINS WITH A SOLILOQUY.

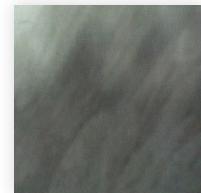
Everything was fine and obliterating. Just as a warm sparkle hidden in the corner of the eye. And just as unexpectedly, it got me... Something creeping in the back of my head again. Should it be this simple? Am I allowed to thrive and flourish as easily as any brainless robot creature would? There was a time I could recite Shakespeare if I wanted to and feel overwhelmed by such perfection. Today Shakespeare means nothing to me. Just another echo from a boring, sad and short-sighted routine.



Eventually, I repeat the same words over, and over again: yesterday was simple, and maybe the day before. And the day prior to that one too... But as inevitably as I once smiled, over the possibility of enjoying everything with such amusement, I now sense things whirling in a melting pot of confusion and deception. Things are definitely not what they once were.



Surely it will go away. This suspicion, this unsettling sensation over what I knew with such certainty. I am probably overthinking, but maybe it's time for another round.

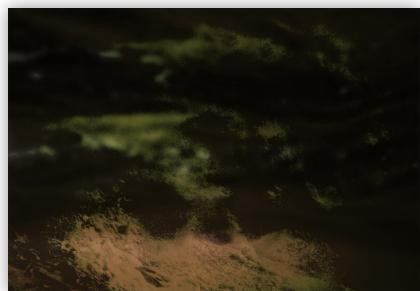


If I do it once again, I'm sure I can erase the parasite that was left behind. The particle that seemed to fit so smoothly and yet became an outlier. I should be bluntly honest with myself, for a masterpiece is never complete. There is always another detail to work around, something one has briefly missed in the midst of the process.

If I were a mirror, then I would like to be a broken one. As long I shatter every biter moment, then I will be safe and sound. I must fight against the dark pits of my mind. And if I am allowed to choose then I will not apologize. I will not stop until I put my soul at ease. As long as I keep on moving to another stage of excellence, I will improve my collection until it is flawless. And that is, I am sure, what will set me free.

SCENE

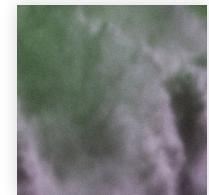
4



THE CHARACTER'S OBSESSION IS EXPANDING RESTLESSLY. THEY'VE GROWN TROUBLED AND UNABLE TO BREAK THE CONSTANT CYCLES OF MEMORY ERASURE. NOTHING FEELS SUFFICIENT ANYMORE AS WHOLENESS AND TRANSCENDENCE ARE AIMED. THEIR MIND IS HASTILY BECOMING MORE CHAOTIC AND BLURRED.



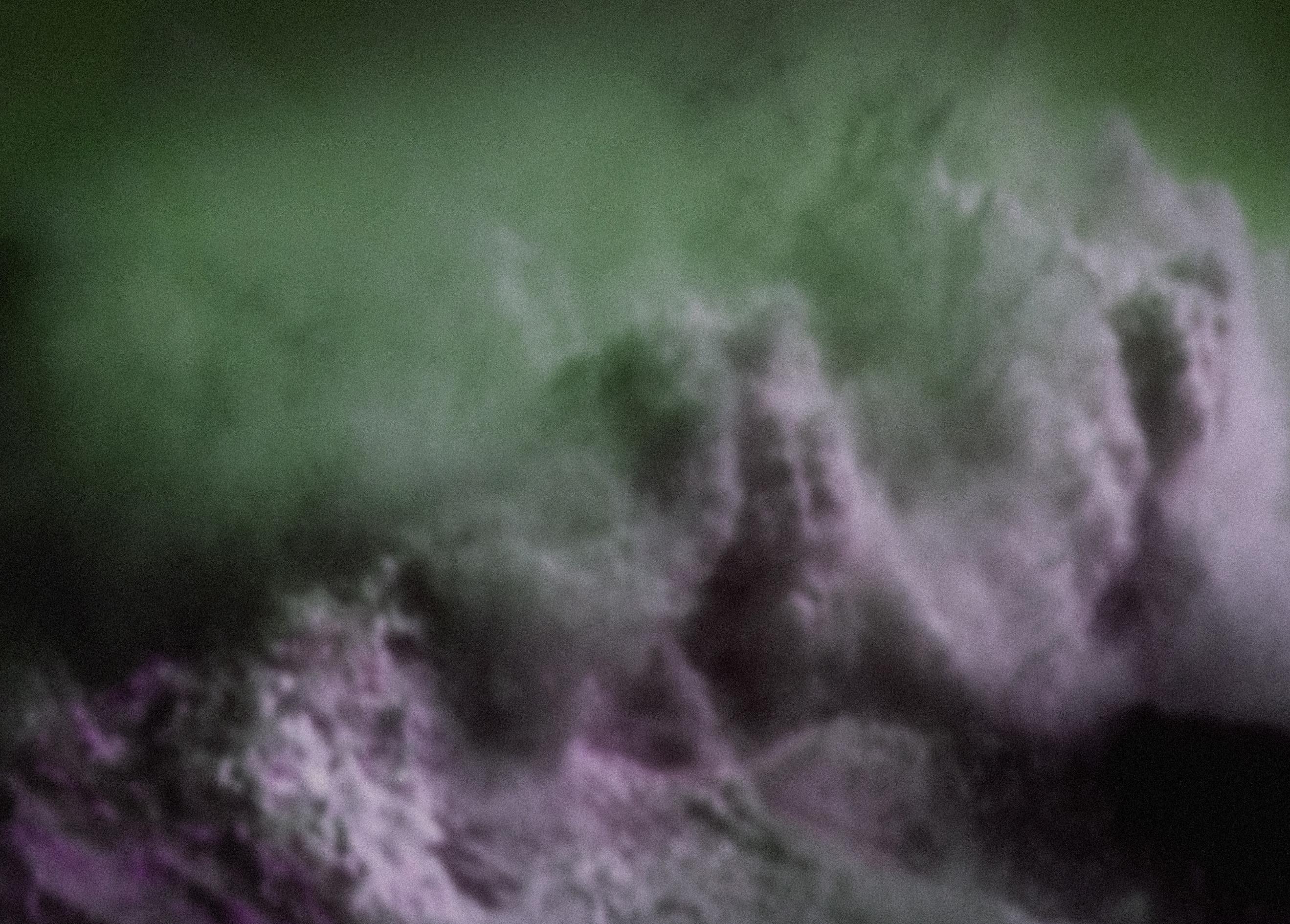
I am at last on the verge of grasping it. I am barely taking a hold of it, feeling its flawless pulsation. And soon, so will my once sore spirit be flawless. This light is not suitable yet — I wonder: where is it coming from? I recognize nothing anymore.



I cannot call to mind the last time I spoke out and somebody took notice. But I feel it expanding, drawing so near. And I will seize wholeness and feel intact — an unspoiled sensation. Safe to say it was becoming unendurable. I desperately yearn for a sense of totality, the strength that derives from being ethereal — of witnessing nothing, perceiving nothing, whilst being it all. Because everything ends up disclosing its hollowness while I haltingly walk towards the void. And everything becomes a wild and irretrievable cause for this agony. I must have peace at last — I will have peace at last. There are empty spaces in my mind, clear nothings. Places to where I let myself evade. To be light and heavenly, that's sufficient for my spirit.

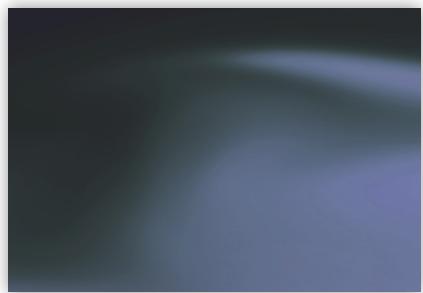


I can no longer sustain the blaring echos of my head. And every day they just grow dirtier and dimmer. I go about it, over and over, I allow my mind to gravitate — where am I precisely, where did it conduct me? Light or darkness. I feel myself sprouting, regaining a sense of integrity, even though it is unclear if I've formerly touched it. How to untangle this? I must liberate my head, unbind it, let myself out.



SCENE

5



THIS IS THE FINAL SCENE WHEN
THE PROCESS OF SELECTION WENT
TOO FAR AND THE LEADING CHARACTER
HAS NO LONGER ANY RECOLLECTIONS
OF HIS PAST EXPERIENCES.

This night has left me walking around in a daze. Either the night or the sunlight — sometimes I can no longer tell. I'm not sure if it's just me but thoughts do not come so easy anymore: they're heavy and reluctant now; they used to be so lively. I assume they've lost themselves in the haze. Maybe they'll find their way back by following the pounding of my head.

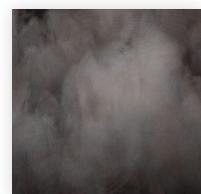


Cause it's getting louder. The pounding is getting louder but I can't hear them. Maybe they can hear it. However, the silence is even louder, I think. I can't even separate what's real than what's not... I'm real but I wonder if the pounding is... I lost my reasoning. The pounding... It's real. But I'm not.

It draws near, ever closer, moment by moment. An impending and thunderous sound. The sun is setting, and in its place, the night blooms. I can see reflections in the water, flicking like lights. Disappearing and reappearing, as so they are gasping for their last breath. They almost seem alive, are they trying to tell me something? ... I wish I could speak, but I don't know-how. I wish I could try, but I don't see the point. It's exceedingly clear my impotence in the face of such entities, and I'd like to say I'm perplexed and anxious, but, truly, I'm unaffected by these changes, about what's to come and what's occurring.

As cosmic haze permeates the air, and the sharp pronounced line of the horizon seems to be effortlessly brushed off as if it was always just a mere suggestion, I feel the smoke pierce my skin. Feeding off all that was left — the fragments, the shards, and the shadows — pervading every inch of the uninhabited places within me. I don't feel scared, and I give in.

I should start all over again. Not sure whether it's pain or pleasure anymore. A sip of both intertwined would surely be more than welcome. Then again, I guess it feels strangely familiar and I have no choice but to embrace it. Surely, I'm spinning endlessly and need to pause for a moment. And the voice again: "There's something cracking in the back of my head".





HE BEGINS TO FIGHT AGAINST THE FEELING OF
EMPTINESS BUT, NOT LONG AFTER, HE LOSES
THE SENSE OF HIS IDENTITY AND OF THE
REALITY AROUND HIM. AS EVEN THE SHADOWS
OF HIS PAST BEGIN TO DISSIPATE, THERE'S
NOTHING MORE BUT DARKNESS.

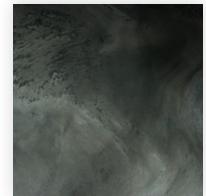


Like a strange pressure, this visceral creature growing and spreading from my insides. Is it even real? It bothers me to feel the unthinkable, to perish annihilated and alone. In which case, I believe I made up my mind: as of today, I shall not sit around and wait for acceptance.

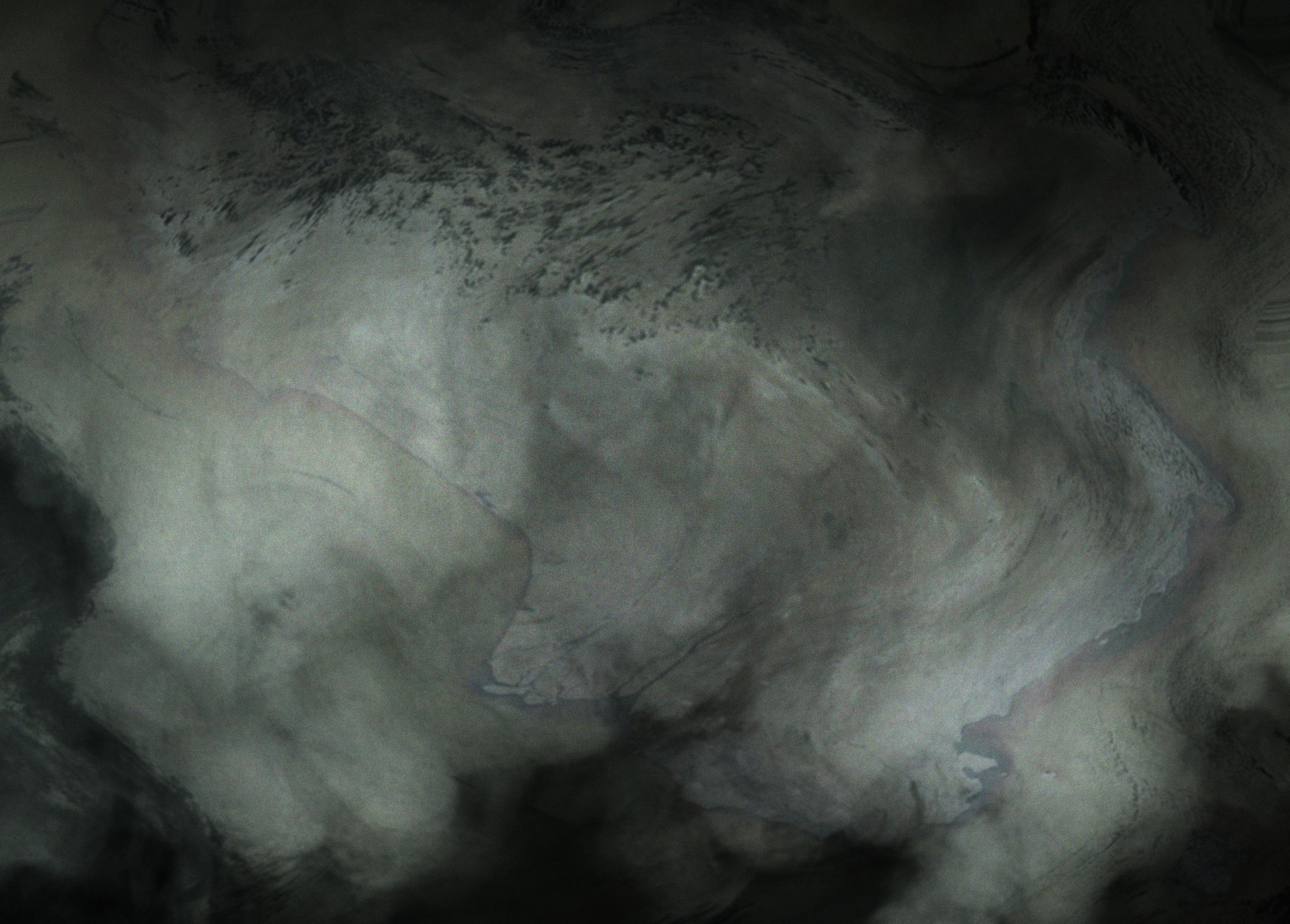
I allow my mind to drift away — nowhere distinct to be found. I do not recognize this place: was my sight ever this blurry? I dwell upon glances of time, blinks of space, blinks of light. I even get to overhear echos of sound once in a blue moon: has the moon always been this gloomy? I will lie on this surface, eyes staring upwards, not ever being able to disclose what it is that moves below.

Lost in time, lost in space, lost in my own thoughts that don't even exist. I know nothing. It all stopped making sense. I wish I could erase something that could change how I'm feeling. But I don't know how I feel and there's nothing more to erase.

These hollow places within me, they must have kept so much. Where life used to outflow and burst, where memories and history would blend, fuse together and again separate, all gone. Now lies here but nothing, a lifeless never-ending sea aching for its past, desiccated, parched of something more. Maybe I could find someone, someone who could tell me something, maybe a story, anything to fill this void. But as I search through all that's left, I find no one, as far as the eye can see: nothingness. A futile endeavor would it be, as I wouldn't be able to conjure the strength. I must be honest with myself: here where I lie is where I shall remain, for I have no place to go, and I don't recall where I belong.



But maybe... Maybe there's still a way out from all this vertigo. That comfortable and secure exit. That secret escape room we all keep to ourselves. In a nutshell: that safe spot no one talks about. I'm sure I have written that somewhere in my notes.... If I could just shut my mind for a minute. I miss the quiet days, the busy nights. Or is it the other way around? If only I could bend my body and light the torch within my soul again....



NOTE ON THE LOCKEAN MEMORY THEORY OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

During the process of assembling this fiction and building its various moments and layers, some conceptual background was found in the Lockean Memory Theory of Personal Identity, as well as in its main objections and responses.

In his 1690 work *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke presents an answer to the resilient philosophical struggle of defining personal identity, by proposing a connection between consciousness and memory — he believes that one's personal identity extends only so far as their consciousness. Therefore, Locke's view holds that personal identity is a matter of psychological continuity. Even though it has been widely criticised and retorted to, Locke's memory theory of personal identity is, nonetheless, a notable subject of debate among modern philosophical circles.

In his essay, Locke explores the idea that the self is “a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places”, and defines personal identity as “the sameness of a rational being”, which means that forasmuch as one is the same self, one has the same personal identity — any shift in the self follows a shift in personal identity, and any shift in personal identity indicates that the self has also changed.

Locke goes on to offer the argument that, considering that to be a self, one must be a thinking thing, and since “consciousness always accompanies thinking”, the self with which one identifies extends only so far as one's consciousness — and this consciousness is equated with memory.

This idea is sustained by Locke's assertion that “as far as consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now as it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done” — if one can remember some experience, one indeed had that experience. Thereupon, Locke arrives at the most controversial part of his theory, which suggests that the converse of the previous argument must be true: if one cannot remember some experience, then one did not have that experience.

Therefore, according to Locke, memory becomes a necessary and sufficient condition of personal identity. When considering states of interrupted consciousness or forgetfulness, Locke claims that “in all these cases, our consciousness being interrupted, and we losing sight of our past selves, doubts are raised whether we are the same thinking thing”.

Locke's theory has inevitably instigated centuries of scrutiny, discussion, and rejection by both his contemporaries and modern philosophers, many of whom question the outcome that memory is a necessary condition of personal identity. For instance, in his essay *Of Mr Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity*, Thomas Reid proposes an objection which brings up an absurdity in Locke's memory theory due to an idea of transitivity. However, in his essay *Personal Identity*, memory

theorist H. P. Grice proposes an amendment to Locke's memory theory which preserves the original terms which stipulate that memory is both a necessary and sufficient condition of personal identity, while simultaneously mending those terms to account for its transitive nature.

The debate around personal identity and the relationship between memory and personal identity as discussed in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions is still persistent, as the extent to which memory is a criterion in the definition of personal identity and selfhood has always been an enticing problem for philosophers. For instance, in his paper *Persons and Their Pasts*, the modern philosopher Sidney Shoemaker attempts to understand how the privileged access to one's own past offered by memory can guarantee that a person remains the same individual over time, and deduces that memory is indeed central to the constitution of the self.

The assertion that memory is, in fact, a fundamental aspect when it comes to personal identity, which dictates a necessary tie between them both, and the objections and responses that Locke's original theory spawned, enhanced the development of this fiction by establishing a reasonable and logical connection between the proposed mechanism of memory erasure and the main character's predetermined loss of personal identity and path of self-destruction through a state of complete alienation.

SECOND INSTALLMENT ANALOGUE

The second installment unveils a deviation of the fiction by exploring an alternative interpretation of the same timeline, this time from an outside view.

It contains a four-part text that seeks to frame the fiction, each part amounting to a moment of memory erasure. It likewise delves into the four-part series of videos created to enact the text.

FICTION FRAMING

ENACTMENTS

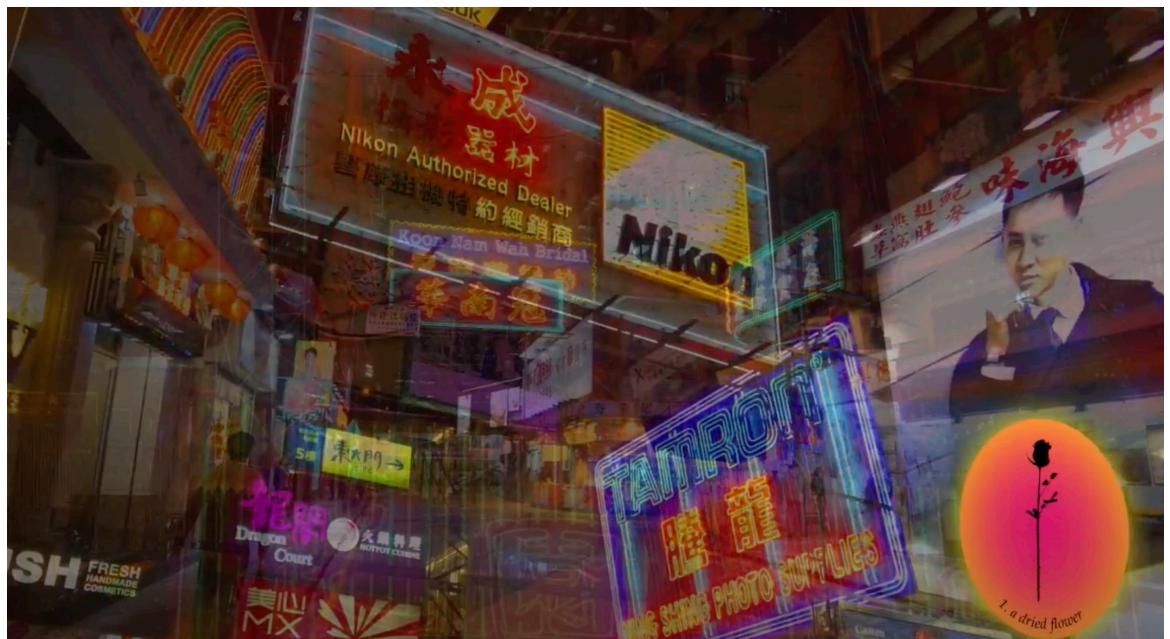
NOTE

ON CHUNGKING EXPRESS:
HONG KONG, LOVE, AND LONGING

Every day the city wakes but it never quite seems to fall asleep. Surely the sun falls down, disappearing slowly, but the night lights itself up. By day, there's the usual day-to-day with its typical rush hour commute. The streets are full of people, from all backgrounds and ancestries, it's cosmopolitan in every sense of the word. Rushing to work, doing their daily chores, or shopping in the nearest farmers market, the people make this city alive and they paint it with smells and vibrant colors, creating intense turbulent landscapes.

But as dusk arises, it carefully starts to grasp all the corners, and twists and turns of the mazelike city streets. Some alleyways fall into a deep slumber, marked in thick layers of eeriness and discomfort. Its quietness is, however, cut by echoes that reverberate off the walls of the towering buildings and skyscrapers, revealing the intense commotion that lurks not so far away. As the setting changes, so do the people, as only a certain type of person comes out at night. The night is for the devious, the lost, the lunatics, the heartbroken and the enamoured, all searching for some type of solace. They populate the bars, late-night food stalls, and 24-hour convenience stores, trying at night to understand the world of the day. And as such, it was his favorite part of the day.

In fact, he didn't care about this city. He could now consider it home, as he had been living there for quite some time, but he didn't. He couldn't shake the feeling that he was out of place, that the people of the city saw him as an invader, with their smugness and indifference. Nevertheless, he was still more comfortable on the street, among the strangers, as he had always been. It was always better than staying home, where he was unable to mask his thoughts with the city's chaos. Spending countless hours obsessing about his short comings, and his lack of friendships, or any other kind of relationship for that matter. His intimate space, a small one-bedroom apartment, is dark and messy. Full of knickknacks and other useless things, he didn't attach meaningless sentimental values to these, collecting them as mere reminders of still being alive, reminders that time is always moving forward. He bought a fish some time ago, never



forgetting to feed it, it became his only confidant and the one thing that grounded him from all the noise in his head. He would enter the house and did what he had to do as quickly as he was out the door, never having the time to tidy things up, or at least have a good night's sleep.

As if he is commanded by his obsessions, above else his aching love, he lives each day aimlessly in the present, never reflecting on what could be or what could have been. He searches eagerly for connection, not knowing in fact what to do if he would ever find it. A hopeless romantic, and a bit of a voyeur, he lives vicariously through other people, more so the loving couples he encounters in the street. He watches them, trying, incessantly, to decipher what makes himself so different and peculiar, and what makes him be so much at odds with reality and the inner-workings of the world... He can't find an answer.

You can find him, usually, in a bar, the one he knows she frequents with her friends, trying to see if she will ever come in. He plays the same song on the jukebox almost every day, as to set a scene of their first encounter, but it seems the universe is acting actively against him. He

frequently cursed the gods who made him, ironic masochists he believed they must've been. Making him bound to an intense need for understanding and affection, while at the same time, making him so socially impaired, living in constant loops of desperation. Sometimes he wishes he had never met this love. Maybe it was an unfounded optimism he collected from somewhere, maybe it was the sheer strength of these same feelings, that made him believe that life without it would be meaningless. He still considered he could achieve it, but the trinkets he collected were starting to add up, and he started to question if the pain and suffering were worth the wait.

Despite all of this, he nonetheless considered he could find some form of love. He had to believe it, for it was engraved in his core, in his personality, these wants, and needs. But maybe, if he could forget this one, and be able to search for love somewhere else or from someone else, perhaps he would have more luck. Time had passed so much, he was imbued in the essence of this person. Sucked in by her charm, he lived for her and because of her. For it all to end, he had to make a final and stern decision, he could never look back. After reflecting and pondering for some time, he decided to define a date when upon he would forget all the time spent seeking her admiration, and the misery that it brought. He decided on three months of pure optimism, the final ones. As this impending transition came closer and closer, as he escaped the first doubtful feeling of the future, of knowing if he had made the right decision, a new feeling sparked. An unfamiliar sense of urgency and restlessness, his usual optimism was gone: now he wanted nothing more but to get rid of all these chains. He grew ever more tired, ever more impatient, a fleeting thought of hatred passed through his mind. He couldn't recognize himself in all this violent turbulence bubbling inside him.

As the last day came, he went one last time to the bar. Their music was already playing, and suddenly he felt a sudden sharp pain to the chest. He was having trouble breathing. Gasping for air, he went outside and sat on the curb. Longing for numbness, for peace and quiet, he thought he heard her whisper. He sat up and went home.

NOSTALGIA, A DISSOLVING HARBOR

2

A feeling of displacement echoes and grows ever more tangible. What once was believed to be steady and reliable, is currently in a state of turbulent flux. He does not belong to the neon glow of this forever-moving and forever-changing city; the lurid flow is becoming disorienting and tormenting to the leading character. He feels as if he has abruptly been dislodged by his surroundings: either the space he stands at has suddenly become distorted or he has simply grown unadapted — even his already-cramped room seems to have shrivelled. He gets up, walks through his flophouse front door and buoyantly wanders on the dazzling and restless streets; however, they no longer feel familiar and no one out there is in truth recognisable to him. The light is even more artificial now than it used to be and it causes discomfort to the character's eye; even the sounds are somehow unreal — aerial, dreamlike.

The character feels detached, loosened: there is barely any space between him and the permanent tide of undisclosed faces (frantically moving, shouting, labouring, being); and yet, he is in fact in the middle of a void, floating far-off. As he walks down the flashy blaring streets, his head can't help but drift away and land on recollections of a neighbouring past — soothing memoirs of a mismatched place. As he perceives it, this place is a sort of illusive past where nothing ever changes; where everything remains coherently the same (the sort of coherence that he despairingly lacks in the present) — where existence oozes unhurriedly and nimbly, always in harmony with his soul. The memories that come to his mind, nevertheless, refer to a concrete physical place — a place where he lived in former days; a place dissimilar to the one which fiercely tramples him now. A deep feeling of nostalgia crawls into the character's head and begins to dominate his reality — and his subconscious. He recalls a warm welcoming place; he recalls the tender eyes and the closeness of his acquaintances; he recalls a neighbourly feeling, a sense of smooth belonging. And the enthusiastic sounds, the high spirits.

He recalls the bright crimson colours, the bold images and the untroubled balanced motion of people, always delighted — never in a distraught pace, bitterly living.

He recalls the balmy nights, the thick yet soft atmosphere, the soulful tunes and the untroubled shared drinking and mingling alongside the endless sea. He recalls the carefree breeze in the evening, the mellow light of the fainting sun — the calm fulfilment. There were no harsh neon lights, permanently flickering and piercing his eyes; there were no hyperactive waves of distressed people; there was no screeching; there was no bustling city. There was no isolation, no solitude, no heartache; there was a peaceful long-lasting embrace brought by the warmth of others and of the now-dissolved city.

And he unconsciously begins to magnify this close yet distant past, thus contemplating a feeling of craved unreachable bliss. He now hopelessly resides in a place he no longer belongs to, even though he is not able to explain his sudden change of heart. And he can only see himself as a lonesome drifter now. And therefore, the memories of that elusive time become burdensome to the character, as his idealised perspective of an unobtainable existence overshadows all of his thoughts and actions. And his reality feels blurrier, thrown off balance.

Peace of mind is inevitably unachievable; living desolately in the delusion of a vanished past is insufferable. And therefore, the character commits himself to erase all recollections of this utopian place. He encloses the images of the unfeasible past by establishing an expiration date: in a month from then, all the memories would be lost eternally and serenity could once again be achieved. He woefully knows this is the wisest way to carry existence — the only viable way. And a month of oppressive living goes by, dominated by a state of exhaustive bewilderment, an unbearable feeling of emotional and physical dislocation and obsessive yearning — the past is gone and not retrievable; the reminiscence has grown unendurable. The character understands the time to obliterate them has come and that it is irreversible.



Memories stay for eternity if we don't erase them. Even if we don't particularly remember something, that doesn't mean we don't have that memory in us. Like that specific object we keep inside a box, in a big old bookshelf. The days pass by and, at some point, we don't remember what's inside the box. In a posterior time, it doesn't occur to us that we even had a box with something inside in our bookshelf.

Memories vanish but never truly disappear. Like the earth, memory has layers. They build themselves on top of each other and some of them, even if buried deep down, constantly emerge to the surface, like lava in a volcano. Others, however, are fossilized and will only be revealed if we remove the upper layers.

The leading character has been removing his memories by chronological order. First, the latest memories, associated with his loved one. Then, the ones related to a nostalgic place, preceding the one he is at now. At this point, the character is doomed to find the deep memories of his childhood. These fossils are now unveiled and became the upper layer of his mind, of his world. There's nothing else covering them. Only the dust of the short memories of the near past that don't even look like memories, of how fresh and unconscious they are. And even those short memories, when they float with the wind, they always find a place to land.

These fossilized memories were scattered across this layer and were not meant to be found all at the same time. Once the leading character found the first fossil, they all started showing up. The first one alludes to a beautiful sunny day.

He can almost feel the heat of the sun in his skin. The relaxing sound of the waves becomes more and more discernible. There is joy. Someone laughs. It's a woman but he is not sure about her identity. Her voice resonates in a very special way. Goosebumps. He hadn't heard that mellifluous voice in so long. The voice is getting distant. The woman is distracted with a man, whose figure is blurred. There's a kid running away from that voice. Suddenly he remembers who they are. The woman is his mother and he is the kid. Running away from his mother, unaware it was



going to be the last time he would see her. Like a magnet, he is pulled to the woods, with that thirst for adventure. His mother doesn't notice his disappearance, she is laid down in the sand with that man he can't remember the identity.

The fossil is emerging more and more and he remembers what happens next. When the kid gets back from the woods, it will be already night and he won't find his mother.

He starts screaming, swallowed by that memory. There's no present for him anymore. He screams to the child, thinking there's still a chance that the past can be changed. All he sees is that kid running faster and faster, with his childish unconsciousness. When the kid tries to go back, he gets lost and the sun sets. He hears nothing. Not even his voice of the future calling him. When he finds the beach where he was at, there's no one looking for him. He is alone. In the present, the leading character cries and tries to close his eyes violently, expecting to avoid seeing that painful image. There's nothing he can do, that memory has been unveiled and that's all he can see now. His own past suffering, unable to change that.

The sadness in him commutes to rage. So many questions. "Why didn't my mother look for me? Who was that man that distracted my mom?".

Maybe if the leading character had some memories of his present time and space, he could reflect on how this episode of needing the concern of his mother influenced his need for the attention of the woman he was obsessed with. But he can't. As he understands he won't find the answers to the questions of the past, he starts wondering how to escape from this sorrow he is in. That reasoning didn't take much more than a few minutes. He decided to determinate an expiration date for this childhood memories. But this time, it was not a question of months. In one week, all these old memories would vanish forever.

INNER SPECTERS, OUTER SPECTATORS

4

In the midst of the latest events, a crack has just cast its shadows over the entire time span – from the past to the present and, almost inevitably, to the future. At this precise moment, the leading character is seated in the center of his room, just about to start another overthinking episode. But in all honesty, he is no longer there. He is no longer anywhere, if one could say so. It is as if his conscience kept oscillating from mere contemplation to a horrific vision of a brutal, mind-controlling state. As he gets up and walks around the room, feeling the sweat dripping from the palm of his hands, the perception is clearly blurred. These memory holes became a torture palace and almost a discouraging spectacle of a boot grinding into his face forever. Nonetheless, the rare memories still remaining, however disconnected, play their part.

He is now walking from room to room, in a hollow house, finding no traces of whatsoever of his past journey. Not that he is actually looking for them. The reminiscent memories are all tangible and mundane, just like a practical joke. The focus is set on what he became on this day, on this hour, even on this minute. And then again, the focus is reset on what he feels on this day, on this hour, on this minute. It is a wholesome but confusing and never-ending exhausting process. Just a moment ago it occurred to him that maybe scrutinizing every detail, every inch of his personality would be the right decision. And that is exactly what is about to be set in motion.

He began by mentally criticizing the conformity achieved lately. And from then on, he started debating the hypnotic persuasion he instigates on every task. The need to perfect in every single step of the way or the boundless consumption of objects he sees all around. It is again a confusing and unstable state of mind. All he knows at this point is that certain habits, certain personal characteristics should be given away. The exhausting quest for overachievement, the excessive self-critique that is never truly absent... Not only they seem unnecessary obsessions but also, they became painful and a complete burden.

And not just these but the small tendencies, the brief but repetitive patterns of his routines creep in as well. Whether it is the constant procrastination or even the urge

to keep everything organized and clean, this too, is a familiar configuration of boring cycles, he recalls. Almost as if his body was a personification of a template of moves, predictable choices on a daily basis that unfold, every time, all the time. In which case, one would have to consider which template would be more fitted to fulfil the activities. Maybe one that wouldn't enclose these redundancies, these glitches and imperfections, he infers.

In the end, it is a mesmerizing sensation. All these handpicked targets are felt like belonging to a vast picture, yet the character sees only a small portion of that. It is an excruciating feeling, to watch mere fragmented images scattered through a time and space continuum that is impossible to perceive.

After walking, back and forth, for quite some time he pauses for a brief moment and looks around, only to realize he doesn't quite know where he is. The room is dark, and there is a slight moisty breeze in the air. The curtains are thin and seem to wave, propelled by the wind that blows from the opened window. Strangely enough, he doesn't know why he insists on opening the window when it is clearly so much noise outside and the air is polluted. Probably, another vain and inconsequential habit that he surely must let go. He doesn't seem to be able to distinguish the rights from the wrongs, the likes from the dislikes.

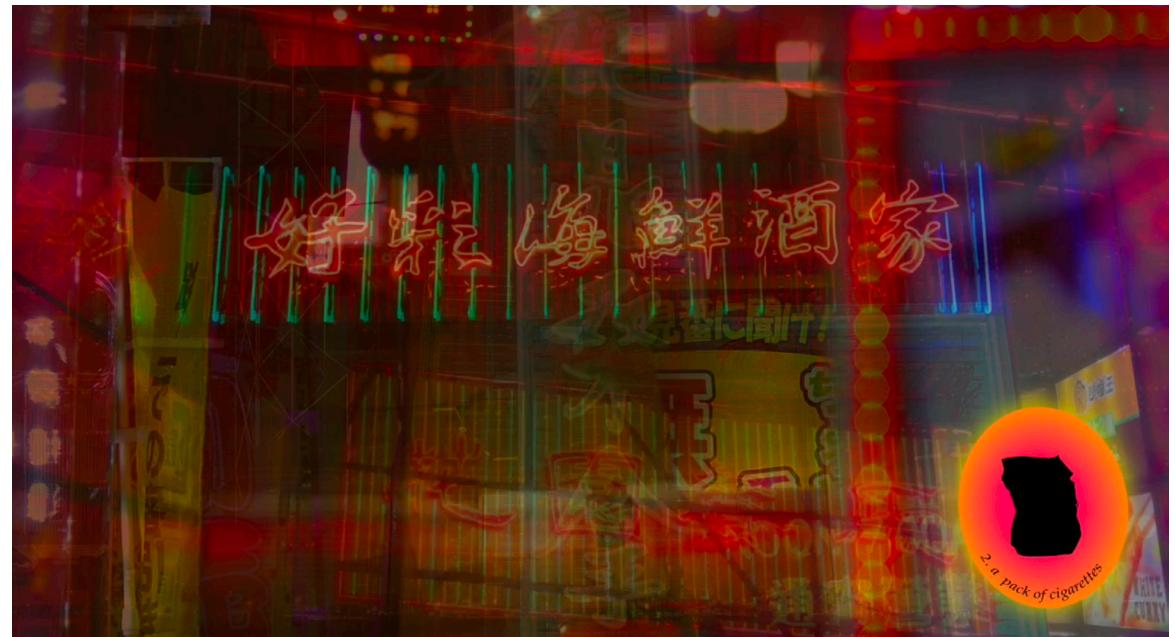
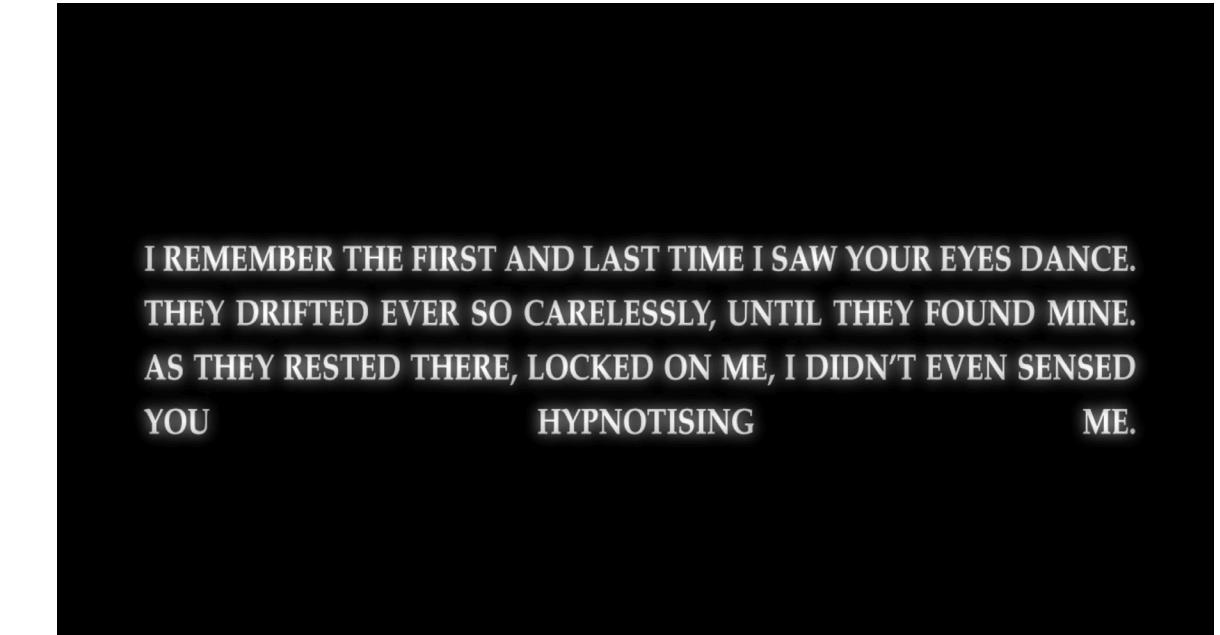
And yet, "this too shall pass", he repeats loudly. By the end of this day he will set another expiration date and eventually burst these shenanigans. The decision is taken while he rips the curtains apart. Precisely in twenty-four hours, all these flaws will disappear. Even though they probably won't, for new ones will arise. But he will never know this. If anything, he is one step closer to an immense nothingness.

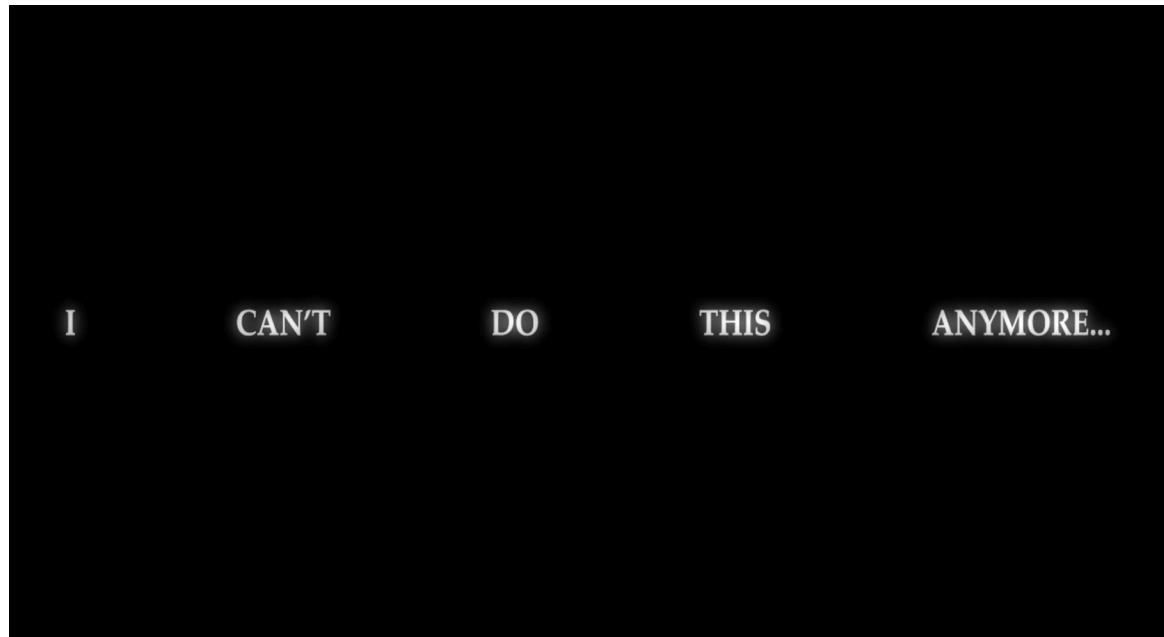
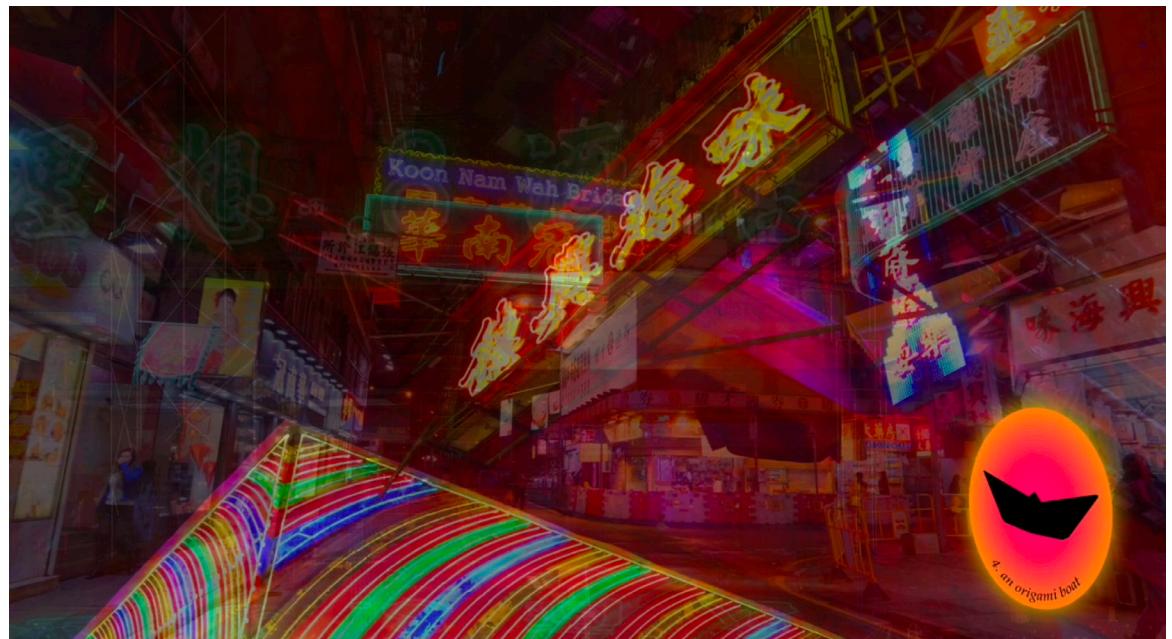


ENACTMENTS

Setting the previous texts as the foundation, a four-part series of videos was produced, seeking to broaden the contours of the fiction by simultaneously hatching some personal viewpoints, as each video was created individually.

1





His intimate space, a small one-bedroom apartment, is dark and messy. Full of knickknacks and other useless things, he didn't attach meaningless sentimental values to these, collecting them as mere reminders of still being alive, reminders that time is always moving forward.

The City, Love, and Despair marks the first of a four-part series of videos delving into the story of *Anachronic Stamp*.

As a starting point, the video explores the origins and the emergence of the feelings that lead the main character through a path of blind destruction. At the core of this act, love or severe infatuation is found as the main reason for the anguish that the character feels, living each and every day consumed by it, failing to gather any kind of reciprocation. Exploring deeper into his mindset, the city and his relation with it, marks a crucial aspect as to understand the atmosphere on which he is enveloped. Feeling lost and isolated in conjunction with a hopeless pursuit for an unrequited love induces in him a deep state of despair and an intense longing for change. Not being able to handle this way of living, and after much consideration, the character defines a date for the erasure of the memories pertaining to his loved-one

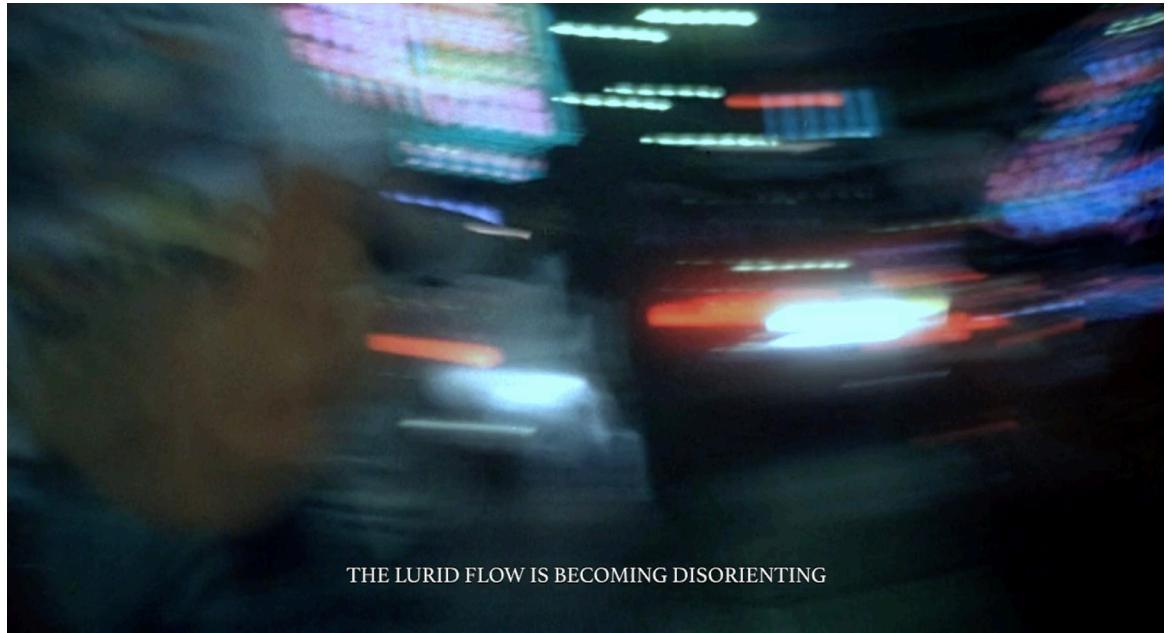
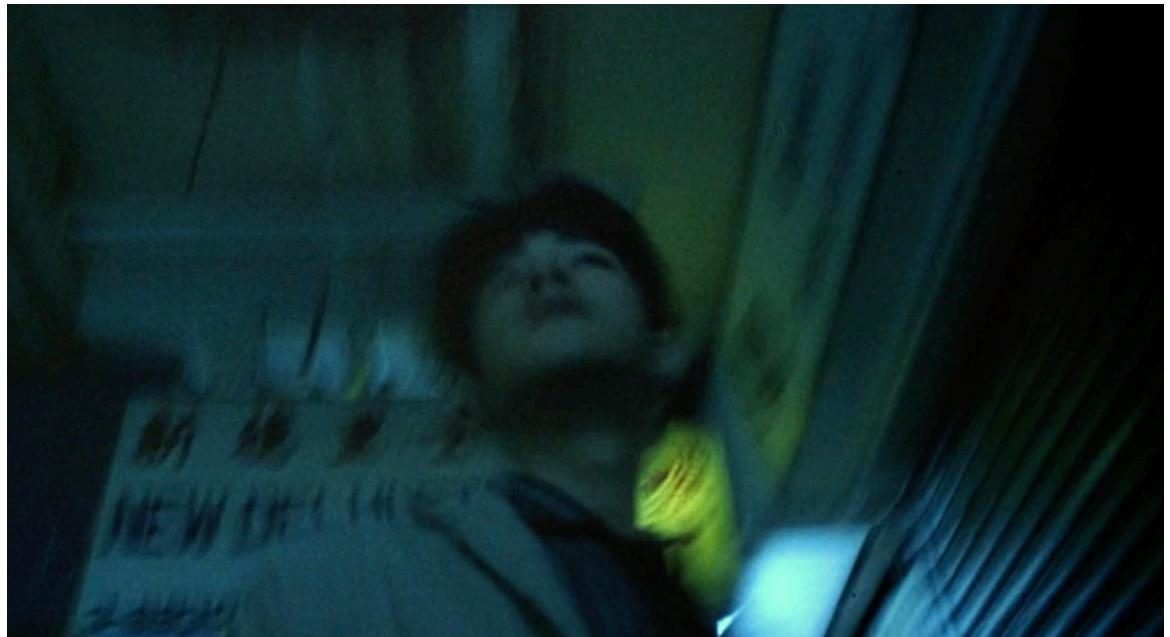
As the elements that guide us and connect the video, the mementos or knickknacks that he collects take on two meanings for the character: they not only become elements that ground him, reminders of the time elapsed in the city, but soon enough they also become painful signs of his shortcomings concerning his love. More so, in this narrative, these objects become true symbols of its inception: material objects in a direction of increasing alienation and of complete distortion of reality.

And he unconsciously begins to magnify this close yet distant past, thus contemplating a feeling of craved unreachable bliss. Peace of mind is inevitably unachievable; living desolately in the delusion of a vanished past is insufferable.

Nostalgia, A Dissolving Harbor embodies the second part of a series of videos that seek to spawn individual perspectives on the fiction *Anachronic Stamp* — an adaptation of Wong Kar-wai's *Chungking Express*.

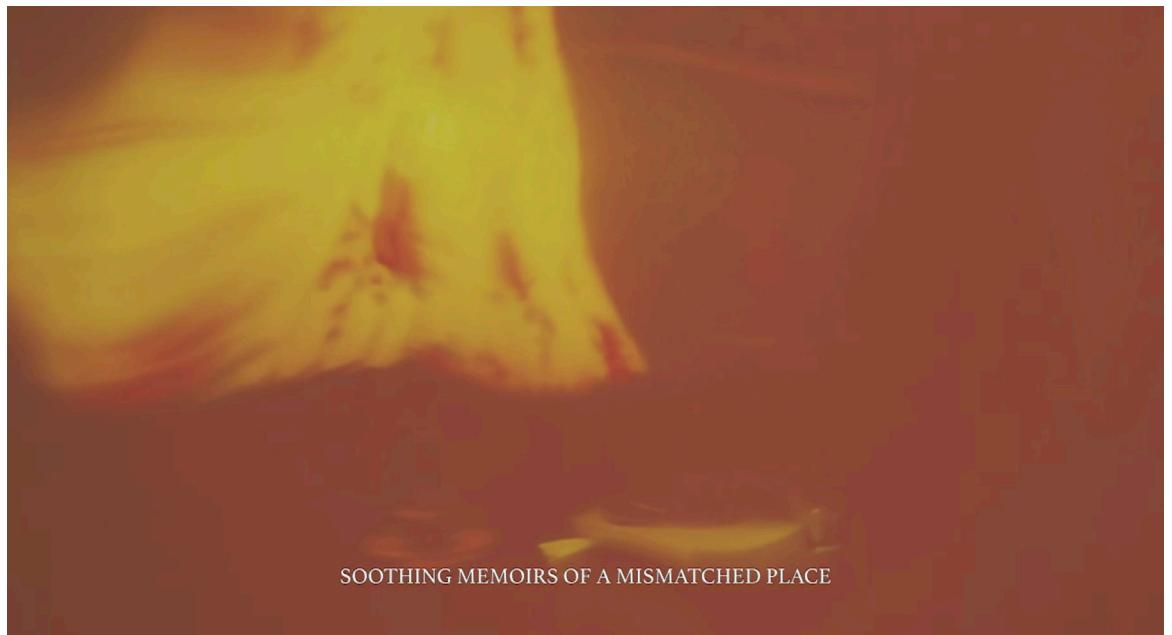
Dwelling in the idea of nostalgia and yearning for a vanished place, the entry of the video is set after the erasure of all memories pertaining to the main character's loved-one. The inaugural seconds of the video evoke the feeling of displacement and damaging disorientation felt by the character, whose only tie to the city he lives in was the now-erased love. Abruptly dislodged by his surroundings, the character is possessed by a deep feeling of nostalgia regarding a near past.

The following part of the video portrays the character's memories of this place and their magnification. The fluctuation of the soundscape and the colors sustain an unlike and somewhat unapproachable atmosphere. This is a craved yet unobtainable place and time. Striving for bliss and serenity, the character commits himself to erase all recollections of this place by establishing an expiration date. Thus, the closure of the video embodies the ultimate moment of obliteration through the etherealness of the soundscape and the rise of the ellipse — a symbol of erasure.

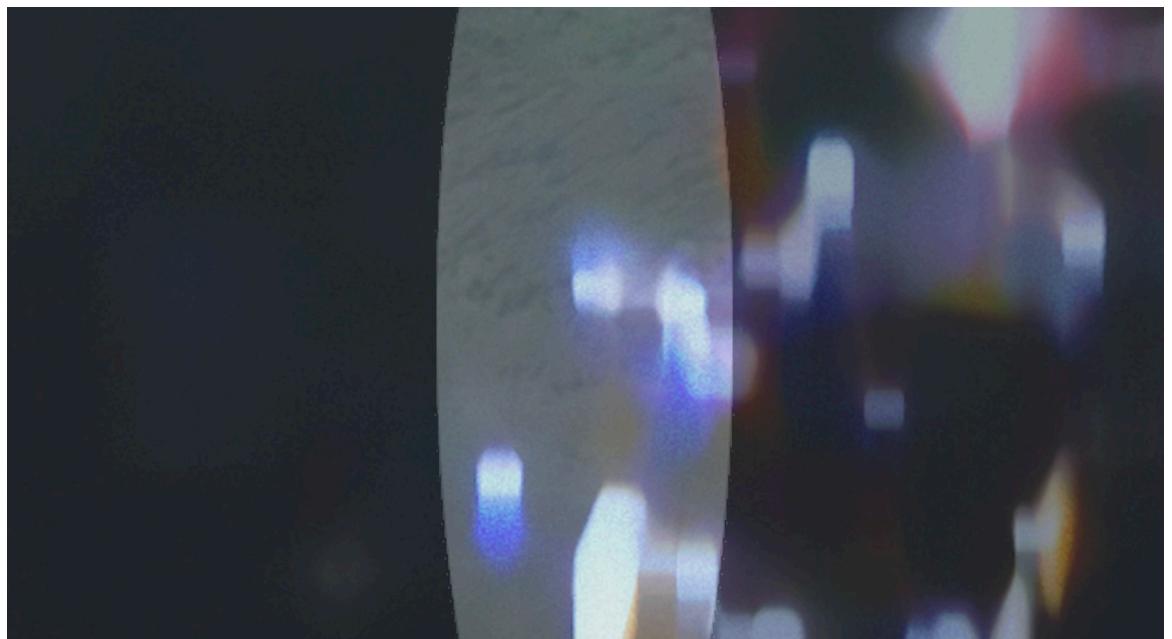


THE LURID FLOW IS BECOMING DISORIENTING

3



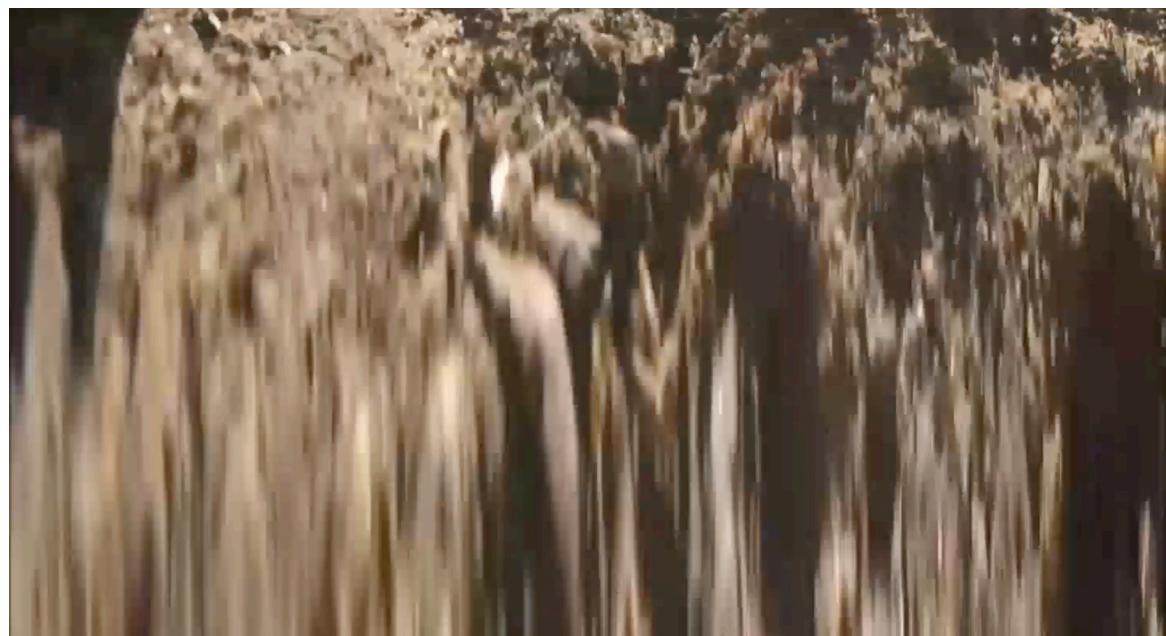
SOOTHING MEMOIRS OF A MISMATCHED PLACE



Like the earth, memory has layers. They build themselves on top of each other and some of them, even if buried deep down, constantly emerge to the surface, like lava in a volcano. Others, however, are fossilized and will only be revealed if we remove the upper layers.

Loss and Revelation represents this third state of this character's process of discovering and destroying his identity. Here it's shown one of his oldest memories, the day he was near the sea with his mother and got lost in the woods, never finding her again. More than concrete images, he remembers feelings and I tried to represent them and make the spectator feel the transition between a first strange state of a "calm" confusion when he is at the sea and a second moment of fear and anxiety in the woods. The music helps creating this nerve-racking rising atmosphere that ends abruptly when the memory expires.

This comparison between memories and the Earth is shown at the beginning and the end of the video. The first frame shows the place he erases in the second part of the narrative. The camera descends until it reaches the childhood memories, shown in this video. After the elimination of these memories, at the end of this video, the camera goes up again, showing the place where he is lastly, the city, where the process began.



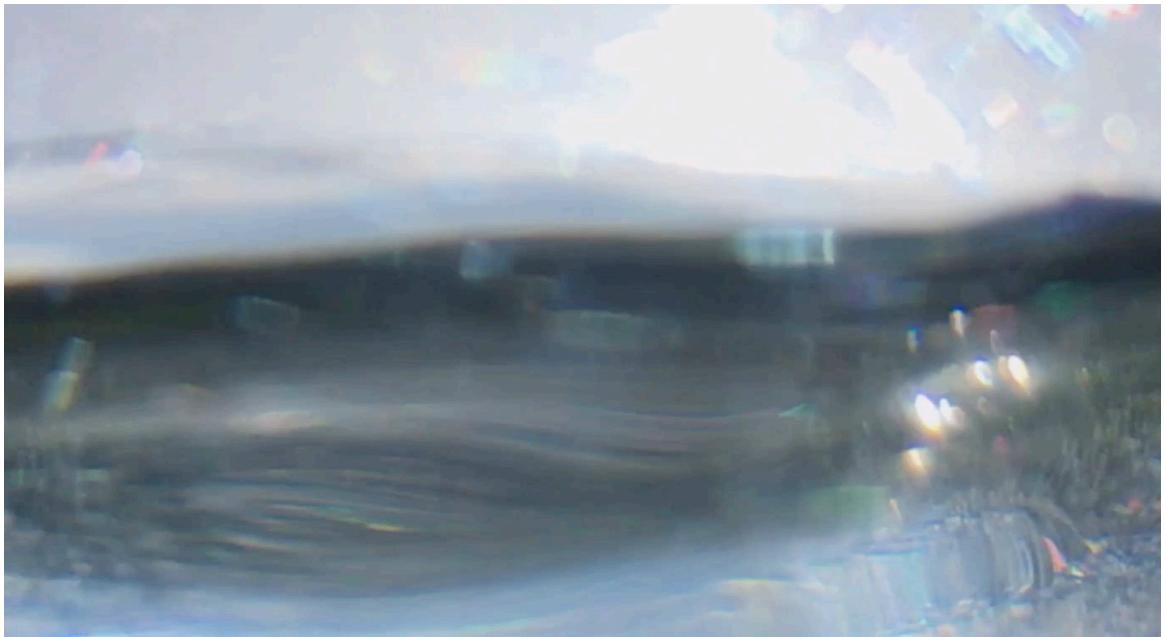
ANACHRONIC STAMP

LIKE THE EARTH
MEMORIES HAVE LAYERS

ANALOGUE

ENACTMENTS - 63

4



Memory serves us as a landmark of personal experiences that are open to interpretation and reframe the past not as fixed narrative but as a multiplicity of voices from diverse points of view. This allows us to think about our personal stories, how we might document things to come.

We have all experienced the feeling of being suddenly transported to our past and reviving intense, emotional memories triggered by a whatsoever stimulus. This phenomenon, usually described by sense memories, tackles an altogether framework of personal accounts. But, what if, one has already lost the ability to understand, connect and intertwine the frames evoked by such process? What if, due to a succession of voluntary erasures of memories, one is left only with intermittent breaks of consciousness, often triggered by senses? The result would probably be a recollection of involuntary strong emotional reactions that intercross each other. Having lost the ability to bridge the gaps, cognitive functions would be eroded, and the loss of identity would surely settle in. We would rummage through a heap of trash, a pile of disconnected, fractured reminiscences. It would be as if life had become an ephemeral concept, which never even existed in a fixed space or time and seemed to disappear entirely when not being performed as we know it.

Inner specters, Outer spectators stands as the last but one part of the four-section fiction.



ANACHRONIC STAMP



of a brutal, mind-controlling state.



ANALOGUE

ENACTMENTS - 67

NOTE ON CHUNGKING EXPRESS: HONG KONG, LOVE, AND LONGING

Considering the departure from Wong Kar-wai's movie Chungking Express which instated the project, it was necessary, at an early stage of development, to rebound with the movie itself — as well as to look into the director's integral work — and dissect its main themes and arguments, while simultaneously understanding its context of creation and Hong Kong's value in cinema's history as a new and unusual urban setting.

In Chungking Express, space seems to be fluctuating, and time seems to be fleeting — people blend into the pulses of the city, intimacy happens only in brief flashes, and eyes meet for mere seconds. This feeling of constant disappearance, even though it is a fundamental element of all Wong Kar-wai's movies, becomes particularly palpable within Chungking Express — a movie that reflects a Hong Kong in transition. Taking into account Hong Kong's historical context, and therefore its permanent state of motion — by the time of Chungking Express, Hong Kong was being handed back over to China after spending time as a British Colony — we can easily perceive the city as a fractured space of cultural disappearance and lack of a distinct identity and collective past.

By delving into Hong Kong's urban scope, the spotlight landed on the sensory overloading amounts of neon, the vibrant colours, the bursting sounds, and the hysterical movement of people,

which Wong's camera effectively seizes. The director captures a forever-moving city through the dreamy editing, building every frame through colour and texture, and deliberately blurring and distorting the senses. Hong Kong itself thus becomes one of the main subjects of the movie. Therefore, Hong Kong's imagery and sensory traits started to more evidently incorporate the project, through all the visual elements conceived, as well as the texts drafted to frame the fiction.

The motifs of love, romantic yearning and longing were encountered in Chungking Express — just as in most of Wong Kar wai's movies — and similarly channelled into the fiction: a hopeless romantic obsession which lingers on as a harmful and burdensome memory; the emotional rootlessness and feeling of physical displacement; the longing for a vanished past; the character's sense of intense loneliness and alienation in a world that is overflowing with people, sensation, and spectacle.



THIRD INSTALLMENT TRAVELOGUE

The third installment focuses on the transformation of the fiction into public online experience, in times of a global pandemic.

[TEMPORARY EXPERIENCE](#)

[EXPERIENCE TIMELINE](#)

[PHASES](#)

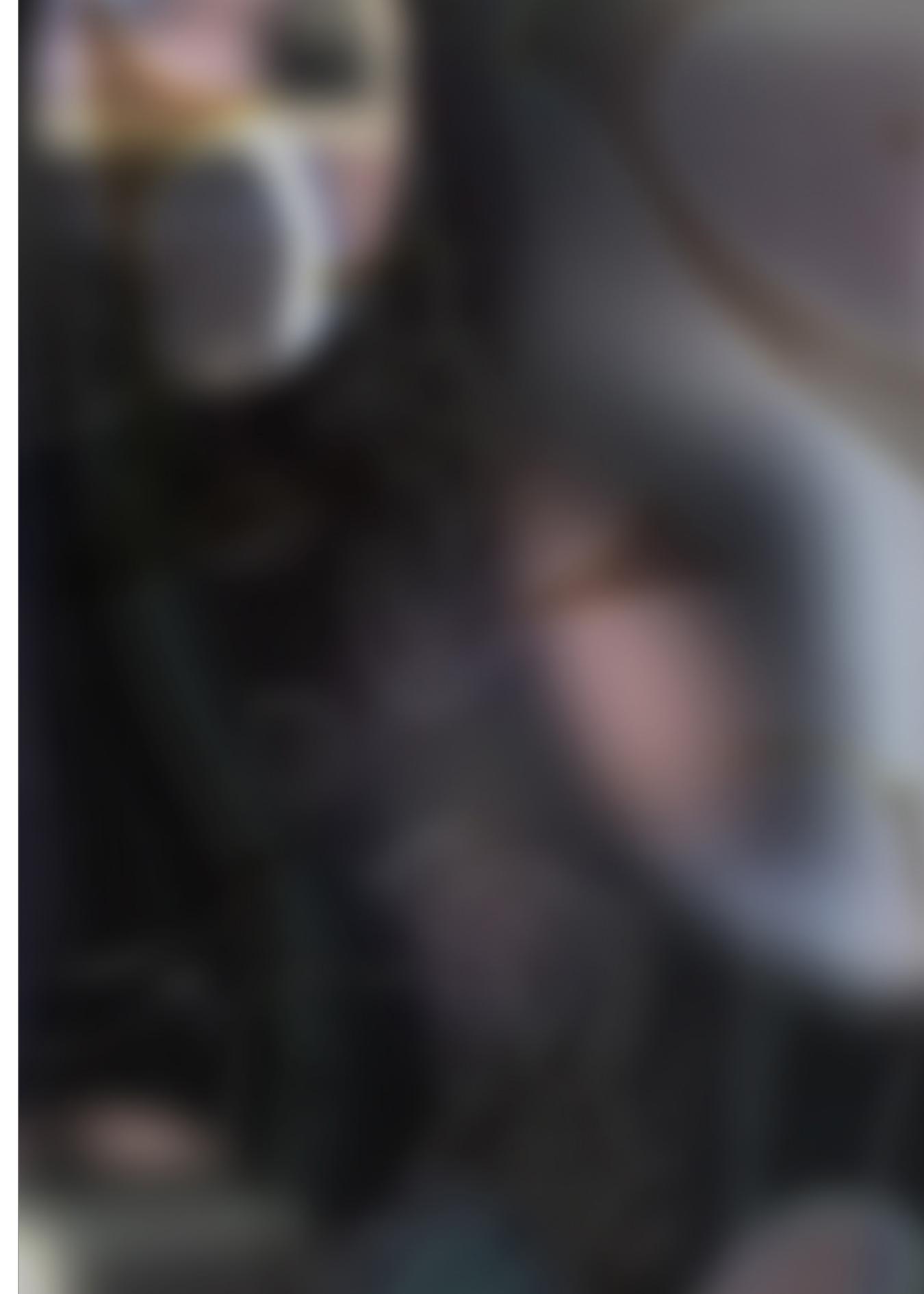
TEMPORARY EXPERIENCE

Due to the global pandemic, which prevented the fiction from becoming a project room built in a physical space with the specific ambience promoted by it, *Anachronic Stamp* was thus embodied in a temporary digital experience, launched in a four-part transmuting website.

The temporary approach of this experience was thought to objectify the fiction's timeline, which outlines four distinct points in the main character's path of self-destruction and loss of identity through four main moments of memory erasure. Therefore, each different phase of the online experience resembles a part of the fiction's timeline and, hence, of the fiction itself — each phase is consequently locked in an expiration date, since the memories it relates to are being erased by the fiction's main character.

In each phase, there's an intentional sense of growing fragmentation, abstraction, and voidness, since the character in the fiction is progressing towards a complete state of haziness and loss of consciousness, due to the continuing erasure of memories.

Opposite to what was built in the Enactments, which delved into the fiction from an outside perspective, the individual character's view is retrieved in the fiction's primary and ultimate object. Therefore, the Monologues displayed in the First Installment are partly exposed in the different phases of the website — through sliding text, a prevailing strategy in the four parts of the website. The aim to create an immersive and possibly interactive experience shaped the development of each phase. Common to the four parts of the website are also the black square buttons, which emit sound when activated, serving to build the atmosphere of each phase. There are also elements, such as graphics or texts, that are shown or erased when hovered with the mouse.



FIRST PHASE



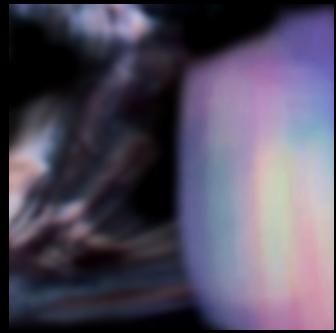
JUNE 1-14

SECOND PHASE



JUNE 15-24

THIRD PHASE



JUNE 25-30

FOURTH PHASE



JULY 1-?



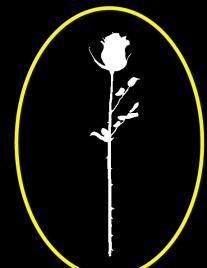
FIRST PHASE

Hopelessly pining for a love that is never reciprocated, allowing this obsession to dominate his existence, the character initiates a path of self-destruction. The city and the material objects he devoutly collects build the enveloping atmosphere. Striving for happiness, he sets an expiration date to the memories pertaining to his loved-one. A sense of increasing alienation and distortion of reality is growing.



AS THEY RESTED THERE, LOCKED ON ME, I DIDN'T

I saw you and everything started shaking. At first, it was something good. Your presence, even if distant, filled a hole in me that I didn't even know existed.



But I started needing more. For the first time, giving you all my time wasn't enough for me. I needed one second, just one glimpse of your beautiful eyes directed to me.



Oh, long are the nights I spend roaming the streets, aimlessly, trying to find something to hold on to. Is this my fate?



Oh, long are the nights I
spend roaming the streets,
aimlessly, trying to find
something to hold on to.
Is this my fate?

Now, the darkness is filling my
body and infecting everything
in me. It's hard to see the light
of the day when the clouds
are too heavy. I look in the
mirror and don't see the
reflection I used to see.

I can't do this anymore. I must
escape the hold you have on me.
I need to erase all these fragments
and shards that took hold of every
nook and cranny of my mind if I'm
ever to be happy again.



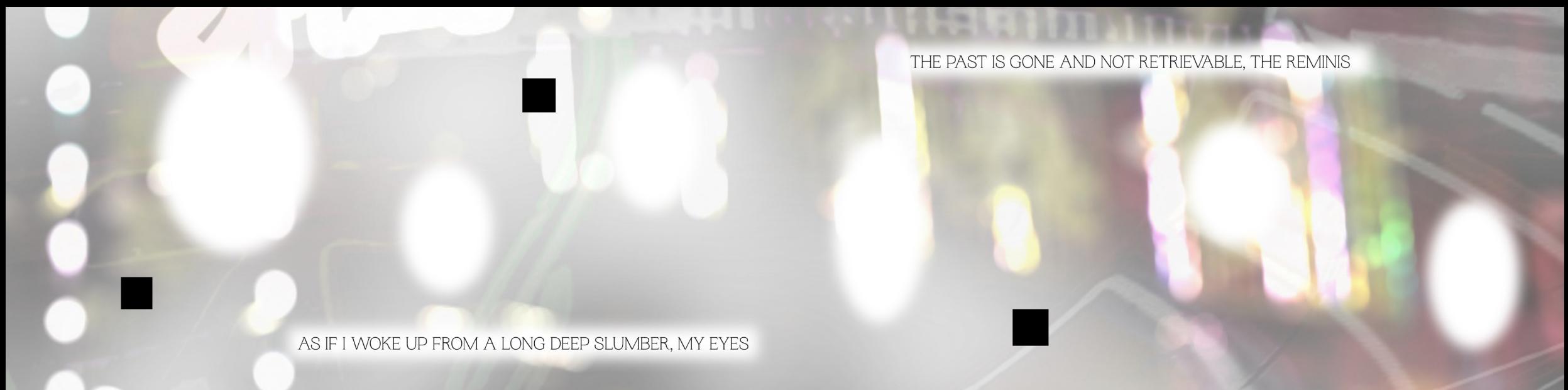
How can it be? I'm asking,
begging for an answer. How can
it be that life inhabits everything
but me? A conditional way
of living. I live only for you my
love. Let me break from these
shackles for once.

I REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I SAW YOUR EYES



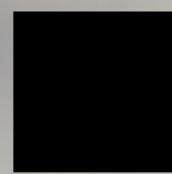
SECOND PHASE

An illusive ambience shapes the character's existence as he attempts to grasp a new sense of reality. A feeling of displacement and disorientation spreads, for the anchor to the city he lives in has been obliterated. An unbearable feeling of nostalgia towards a near past crawls in. Craving for serenity, he commits himself to erase all recollections of this now-vanished place.



AS IF I WOKE UP FROM A LONG DEEP SLUMBER, MY EYES

THE PAST IS GONE AND NOT RETRIEVABLE, THE REMINIS



AS IF I WOKE UP FROM A LO



THE PAST IS GO

ONG DEEP SLUMBER, MY EYES

NE AND NOT RETRIEVABLE, THE REMINIS





THIRD PHASE

A state of alienation and utter distortion of reality is expanding. The emergence of long-forgotten and repressed damaging memories dominates the character's existence. Fragments of bright fading recollections build an ambiguous atmosphere. A fractious desire for restfulness incites the need for obliteration.

LIKE THE EARTH, MEMORY HAS LAYERS

THINGS ARE DEFINITELY NOT
WHAT THEY ONCE WERE.

I WILL IMPROVE MY COLLECTION
UNTIL IT IS FLAWLESS.

I WILL NOT STOP UNTIL I PUT MY SOUL AT EAS

THAT IS, I AM SURE.
WHAT WILL SET ME FREE.



THINGS ARE DEFINITELY NOT
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THAI IS, I AM SURE,
WHAT WILL SET ME FREE.





FOURTH PHASE

Due to the ceaseless cycles of memory erasure which he can no longer control, the character barely has any frames of reference left and his identity is increasingly fragmented. A frantic state of haziness and breaches of consciousness dictate his existence now. Disjointed reminiscences are continually obliterated and a sense of voidness is expanding, while time and space feel like nonsensical concepts.



10 DAYS
TO EXPIRE

I AM AT LAST ON THE VERGE OF GRASPING IT



JUST CAST ITS SHADOWS ON



I MUST

I RECOGNIZE NOTHING ANYMORE

/ER THE ENTIRE PH

IT

AVE PEACE AT LAST

IN THE END IT IS A MESMERIZING SENSATION

FOURTH INSTALLMENT

EPILOGUE

The fourth installment concludes the project with a global vision on the entire process and the importance of all the questions and answers brought by this fiction.