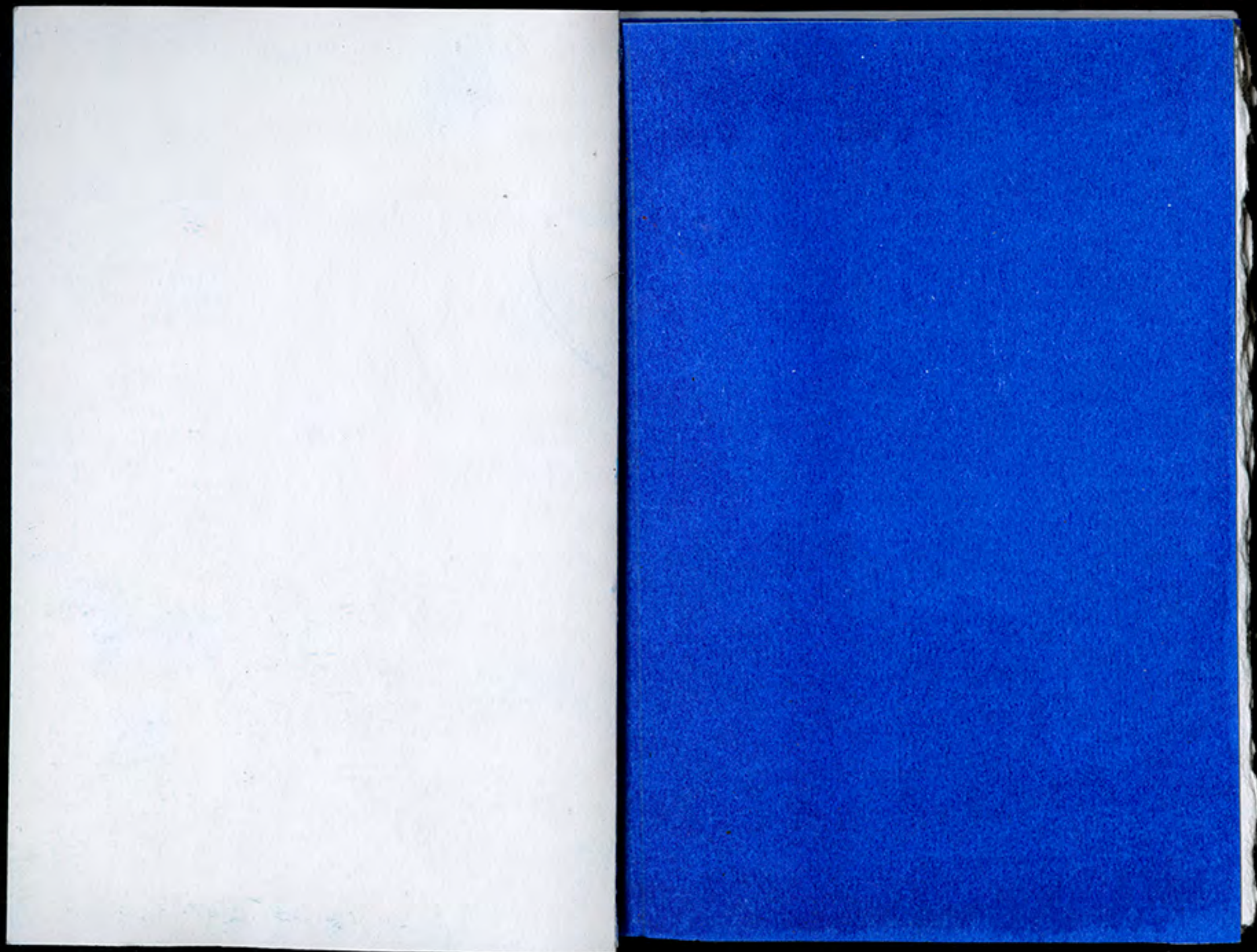


I became a cat.

It is not about cats.
It is not about if you have the ~~permission~~ to see the cat.

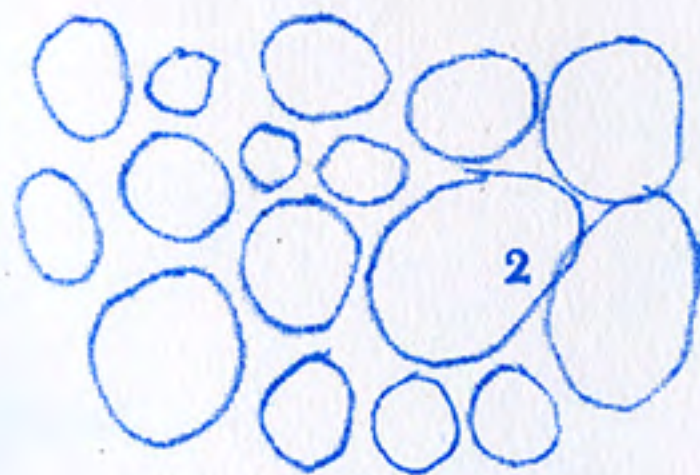
Don't see



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I love cats.

I love how willful they are. I love how they live intuitively. I love how they show their desire and emotion without hiding. I love they are always curious about new things though sometimes fearful of unfamiliarity. I love how indifferent they seem to be, but are actually alert to the changes in the environment. I love how they annoy humans in a cute way so that no one will really be angry at them.



I want to be a cat.

At the beginning of my practice, I focused on mimicking the physical characteristic of cats. I tried to mimic the milk-tea fur color cat with a lustrous coat that shines like a brown rock sugar in the sunlight. I tried making my eyes crystal blue like the Birman. I tried to acquire all the physical characteristics of the cats that are popular among human beings. After a while, it struck me that, I was still a human. I felt my heavy human body even as I disguised myself in a feline look.



I came
to

and

started
to

learn
how
to behave

like a
cat
and
inhabit
the
cat
spirit

new city,

Everything becomes so BIG to me now. It was hard for human me to recognize immediately if the flying little bug in front of me was a fly, a moth, or a ladybug. But now as a cat, I can see the small clearly. However, my fear of butterflies and moths doesn't disappear. But I do have the cat instinct to play them with my paw. I'm always struggling between my human fear and my cat instinct. But actually, now that I can look at them closely, they are not as horrible as I thought. I wish I could collect and seal them in bubble wrap as my toy collection. They are much more interesting than the stuffed toys and fake mouses that are made of such low quality.



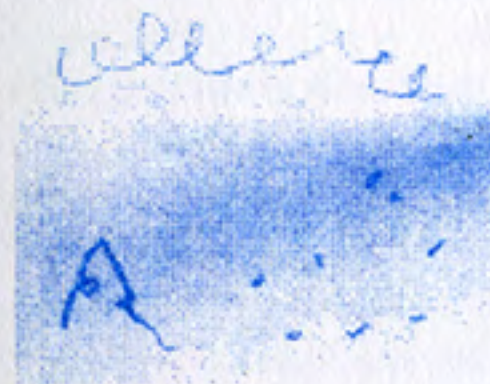
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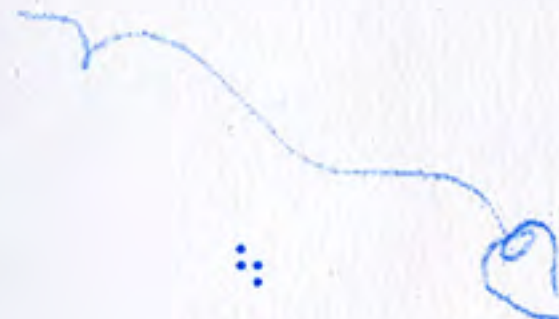


My sense of time is really different from how it was as a human. Living without a watch or a calendar, the unit of time for cats is based on the change of the environment. I can stare at the cherry blossom tree for the whole day, to see the petal being blown to the ground in a gentle breeze, and then being blown away by the air of passing by cars. I read the color of the sky, the smell of the breeze, the death of flowers, the decadence of abandoned buildings, the rain ink on the wall, and the shriek of cicadas.

E v e r y t h i n g .

Everything indicates time. I tried to put a sign on the pine tree in the neighborhood every day when I see the sun moves below the horizon to count my age. But I quit at the point I found out I can know my own age by carefully tasting the texture of my fur when cleaning my body. Although I am not able to know an accurate number, the information is enough for me to notice my own decadence, like that abandoned house.





Another thing I need to learn is the language of cats. As you might already notice, while humans generalize cat language as "meow", there are lots of different meanings and details in meows. Different tones of *meows*, length of *meows*, and even the angry hissings stand for a different meaning. Every cat has its own language system, a black cat I just met has such a gentle meow that every time he speaks it sounds like as though he's singing a *lullaby*. A cat friend that I knew for five years developed a complete (but also noisy) meow system so that the human can easily get his meaning. I was inspired to develop mine. Last time, when I noticed the neighboring humans who wanted to invade my territory, I tried my best to hiss at them.

Unfortunately, I didn't make my emotion explicit enough in that hissing sound, and they didn't get it.

~ 2/3 ~

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Now that I have become a cat, my tears are caused by illness but not sadness. In other words, I have lost the ability to cry in sorrow. However, I still feel sad. The grief inside my body finds another exit--my fur. My fur becomes shorter every time I feel upset. This probably comes from the old habit I had when I was human.

I cut my own hair after crying. It's hard to notice it diminish when I see myself everyday in the reflection of windows or the puddles on the roads. As a result, my fur was long as a Persian but now is as short as American shorthair. Due to my understandable resistance to be a Canadian Hairless, I now try to

distance myself from everything, everyone, and every cat. I often chant in my mind the Buddhist quote 「心如止水」 (Xīnrúzhishui), which means 'the mind is calm as stagnant water'. Buddhist monks shave their head bald to achieve 「心如止水」. I try to be 「心如止水」 to keep my hair.

Talking about old habits, the other old habit I have is organizing and cleaning up my living space when I run out of ideas and inspirations. I take the spaces as my brain. All the randomly put items are my messy thoughts that tangle my head. Organizing them is a way to keep myself busy enough to forget about the stress. It is also like restarting my thinking, closing all the squished Chrome tabs after ending a big project, or dragging all the overlapped screenshot thumbnails into the trash. However, when lots of fun ideas occupy my mind, my room would be as messy as a typhoon inside. Stuff would be scattered, like the drips of paint on a Pollack canvas.

The cleaning up happens periodically, like menstruation, monthly and often with great pain. Back to my cat life... my paws don't allow me to really organize my stuff. Normally, I look like I am digging my litter, not arranging things. Not to mention that living in a back yard, it is meaningless to organize the fallen leaves and petals. All efforts will be in vain when winds blow. But I still find a way to relieve myself—grooming! This is so much more satisfying than thinking about what earrings to wear and what color of blush to put on. All I care about now is the direction of my fur. *Sometimes I brush it in a natural direction.* Sometimes I brush against the grain to feel a sense of rebellion. That is why I am resistant to be a Canadian Hairless.



So...there is still one big challenge for me---to follow animal instincts, especially the sexual instinct. It always comes to my mind how loud cats living in my hometown neighborhood yowled when they were in their period of oestrus. Humans often complained of their undisguised cries. They sounded like screaming infants. My cat friend was castrated but he still showed his sexual desire to his human. He has a stuffed toy monkee as his sexual partner. When he wants it, he grabs the monkey with his mouth and meows loudly to make his human play the monkey with him. I still have trouble talking about sexual instinct directly. But I am developing a language that attempts to move outside of the conversational rules found in cat systems.







Recently, I have often thought of my junior high school experience of playing in the orchestra. There are lots of sections in the orchestra. In most cases, the violin is the only instrument that gets two sections: first violin, and second violin. As the name indicates, the second violin is secondary, less important, and supportive to the first. As second violins, we were in a lower pitch. We had lots of whole rest notes on our music sheets. We were often ignored. In the rehearsal, when the conductor instructed the other sections that carried the melody, we needed to sit up straight, keep quiet and listen.

During the performance,


even though our music sheets were full of rests, we would hold the violin elegantly and tap the beat. Before the new sections started, all the second violinists neatly let the violin sit on their shoulder and sneak in the melody that excluded us.

We acted like cats, like the cats that sit in front of the window with straight necks concentratedly staring at the outside world. Everything seems on pause, but if you look closer, the fluffy tail is quietly wagging with rhythm. At the moment the fly stops on the window, the paw is out.


The other sections didn't care about how good or bad we played. Due to our secondary nature, they often thought we were inferior. But there are still times when the second violin plays the highest line. At those unusual moments, we gained everyone's attention. When we practiced, we spent the most time on those sections. *We drew our bows with our whole mind to sound the string beautifully, like the cats' soft but steady rub against human legs—eager to get a treat.* But the reality is, those honorable moments didn't happen often. No matter how well we played, people had the impression that we were second rate. We didn't get our credit until the conductor said we did a good job. People judged us based on how the conductor judged us, but not on how we performed. It was upsetting but understandable. Normally, people would not care and appreciate the flat and quiet melody. Being secondary is a tag that is hard to remove, and sometimes to have the courage to remove. Once the instructor asked me if I was willing to play the first violin. I refused.



I wake up to the sound of birds chirruping every day. The chirruping is such a willful clock that doesn't allow for time setting and being turned off. When I open my eyes each morning, the sky is still in a purplish grey color, but with a touch of jacinth glow around the horizon. The first time I noticed the birds was in a very windy morning in the summer. The birds were so loud, like a big group of people whistling together. But when the wind hit, the rustling of trembling leaves absorbed the high frequency of the whistle, and it became more like a sharp blocked-nosed snore. It sounded a bit sticky. I was thinking about how this sound wonderfully stood against the description of singing bird as a beautiful young lady in the oldest existing collection of Chinese poetry 《詩經》 (Shijing), then I heard *the bird*. *The bird* cried with a mechanical voice in between the snores.



I expanded my pupils to see through the branches,
but nothing was there. I was almost certain it was
hanging around the unseasonably bare branches.
However, no matter how carefully I scanned the
branches, there was no sign of *that bird*. From that day,
I can hear *that bird*, but I have never seen it.

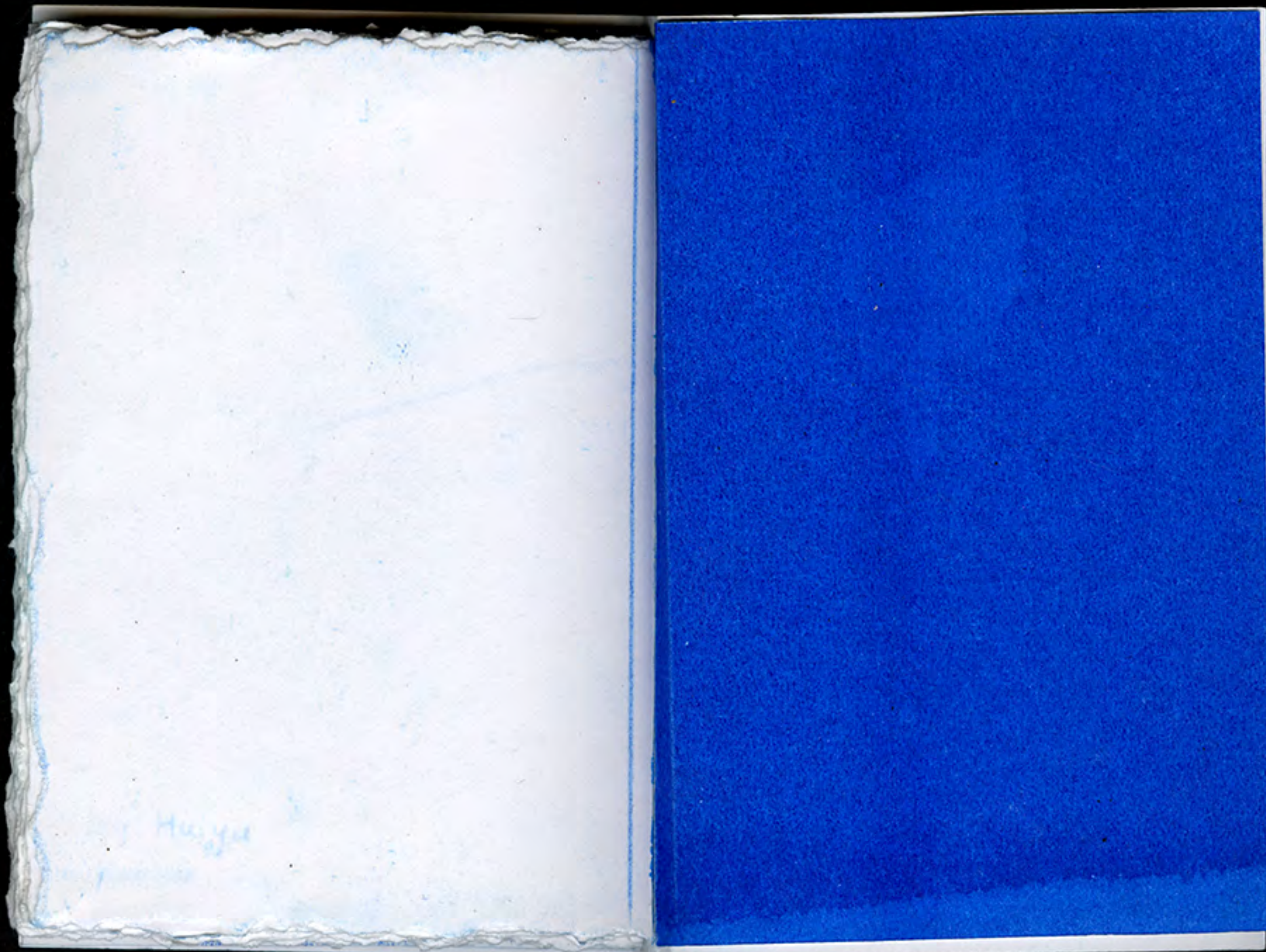


Being a cat is more about being honest. Not only the sexual instinct but showing affections directly. As a human, I was so used to disguise and to read the air (living without this skill in my home country would be considered rude). But as a cat, if I'm too polite or overthinking, I will never survive. To survive cold winters, I have to slip into a property through a gap without informing the property owners. I need to hiss to show my anger when I'm irritated and to frighten my enemies so they won't attack me. I rub a human's leg without shyness and pride to gain food and treats. I am no longer able to be polite again. Humans love us due to our self-orientated nature, which would be a negative character as a human. That sense of rudeness becomes the cats' charm. If any cat lives in a polite way, it would be considered as too timid and not closed off to human beings, so not cute enough. I am required to show how I feel and think and need with great honesty. I no longer need to worry if my anger or rudeness will hurt others.

After a struggle, I have managed to be a half-cat, but still strive to be a real cat.

I have a kinked tail. I sometimes accidentally meow in my human voice. Now I am sitting at the edge of the pond and wondering what to do. A light and warm wind blows across the pond. The summer is coming.





by Huiyu

1.

