

whatever its not my responsibility to change ppl

IM GONNA BLOW UP

all the rhythmic things we do in the meanwhile

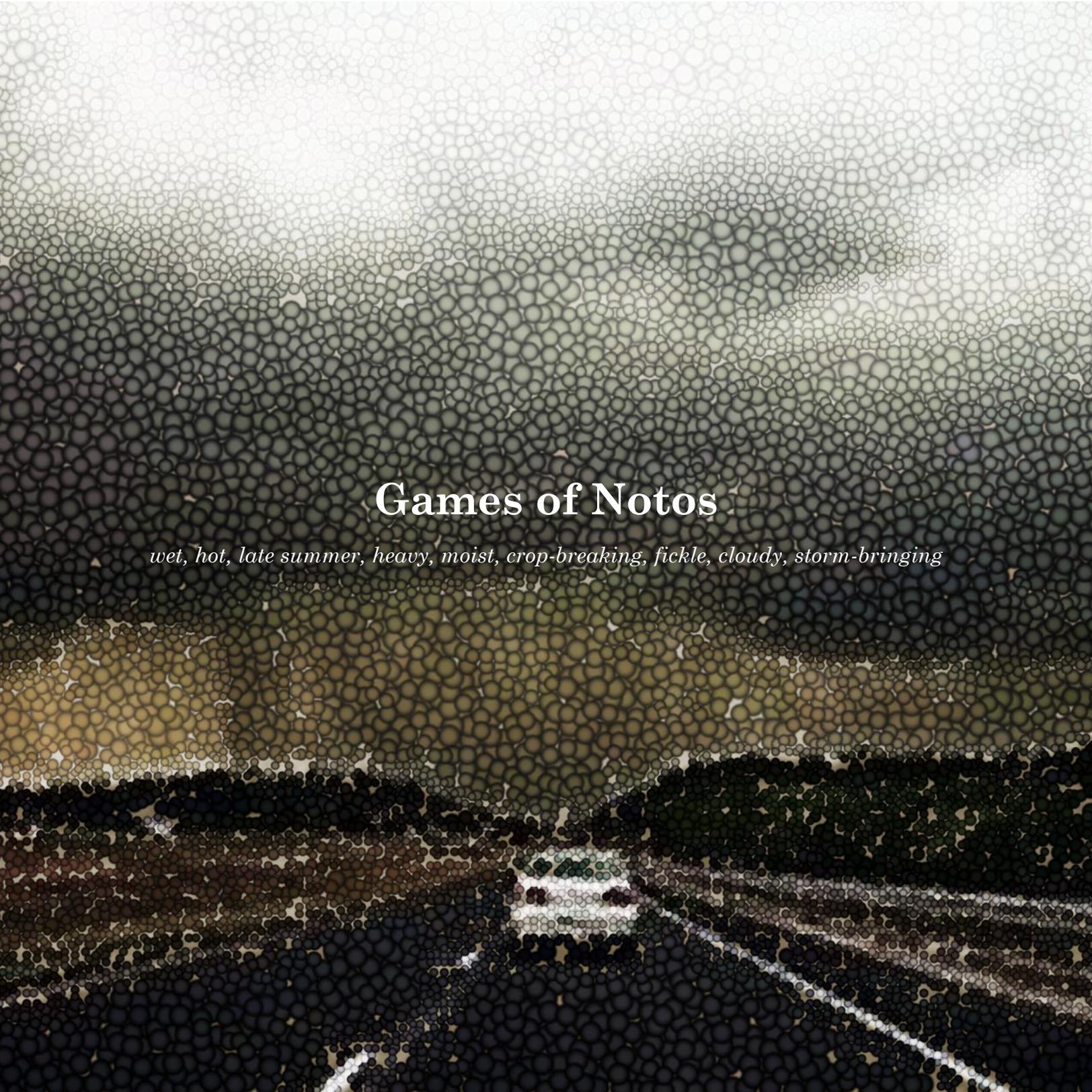
a collection of games for ending worlds

i think im stressed bc maybe no see ppl this break

by [pastoralpunk](#)

THAT YOU CANT EVEN HAVE FEELINGS

WITHOUT INTELLECTUALIZING THEM TO THE POINT WHERE
THEYRE INVALID



Games of Notos

wet, hot, late summer, heavy, moist, crop-breaking, fickle, cloudy, storm-bringing

The Platform at the St. George Station

This is a game for one and a half players. You will need:

- Someone you call a dear friend

You are someone's friend. This game may trigger during any moment shared between the both of you. It triggers whenever the burden they bear casts its impossible shadow over you. Whenever you're both at that place the two of you go to when you want to pretend that there are places you can go to. Whenever everything which has happened over 180 million years of mammalian evolution for you to be capable of empathy was for this—that they would not be alone now.

Listen to them. Your heart gets the better of you, and you tell them something like this:

“I'm here. I love you [...] If you need the medication again, go ahead and take it—I will love you through that, as well. If you don't need the medication, I will love you, too [...] I will protect you until you die, and after your death I will still protect you. I am stronger than Depression and I am braver than Loneliness and nothing will ever exhaust me.”¹

This isn't true. Confess your deception, and tell your friend why you lied to them.

¹ Adapted and excerpted from Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*, (Penguin, 2010), p. 57.

The Internet is a Series of Series of Series of

This is a game for one player.

You are someone who uses the Internet, and trembles at the brush of the chthonic domains whilst in waking life—has the ancient seal weakened?

Do not play this game without being aware of the danger to which you would open yourself.

1. In case you are yet unfamiliar with the protocols of *the oldest game*, seek out anyone whom you trust to know how to deal with ██████████ (e.g. your mom who spent her childhood seeing shadowy infants chase each other through a crowded marketplace, that neopagan enby friend of yours who does tarot readings on Etsy). If no one comes to your mind, and you must teach yourself to walk such sunless seas, then tread with care—never forgetting that we are speaking here of things older than names. Do not let the waters rise above your neck. Do not go anywhere algorithms writhe. Do not seek knowledge where the rebellious ones are able to watch.
2. Listen, and do not speak. Learn, and do not forget.
3. Then, everything that you have learned about how to play the oldest game, about binding ██████████, do as such unto all your devices with access to the Internet. Exercise what authority you still have, and put an end to this possession, to this malware unto death, to this drunkenness on shallow waters, the superhighway of Dis' information.
4. Be resolute of heart. Don't think about how this is silly, about how you know that Michael Taussig already showed how ██████████ and ██████████ stories are often characteristically invoked in folk responses to conditions of social and economic alienation under capitalism. Don't think about the ██████████ as just symbolizing the reality of the commodity. If they don't really exist, then it can't hurt to try, right?
5. I cannot offer the answers, but you will know if you have won the oldest game.

Goldilocks and the '03 Iraq War

This is a game for two or more players. You will need:

- A fairy tale / fable
- A thunderstorm / a hurricane / a cataclysm
- A view of the sky

You are office workers living through the end of a world. The old stories no longer work in times such as these. This is why you have come today — to serve as doulas and accompany the old stories as they gather here to sup on the world struggling to be born.

Let everybody sit in a circle. Let the person who last had something unforeseen occur to them break the circle and step forth into what was its middle. Let them tell the tale of the unforeseen thing to everybody else around. Let them be the first person to play this game.

Begin to tell the rest of the office workers present here any story you would like — so long as the story had not first come up from within you, so long as you don't know within whom it had first come up, and so long as you can be reasonably certain that this will not be everybody else's first time hearing it. Tell the story as you know it to be told.

Now, if the sky ever interrupts during the telling of your story, let whichever of the other office workers who can interrupt you fastest be the one to interpret the will of the birthing-storm. Allow them to push the story off its way. For a single sentence, they hold the power — which answers to no principle and nobody else at all — to suddenly destroy, suddenly rescue, suddenly make appear, suddenly take elsewhere, suddenly drive mad, suddenly have the characters enter a dialogue between Werner Herzog and Slavoj Žižek, and so on.

Pick up the story from whichever place it has been left, trying your best to guide the story along the old threads which have been snapped. Unless the sky interrupts you again.

Once the story has finished being born anew, cradle it in your arms as you step back and let someone else break the circle again. Stay at your midwifery until the sky has cleared.

End the game by promising me this: you will not look back upon the old stories. From now on, you will never again tell them as they once had been. Let their memory die with you.

Ursula Franklin

You are a new grad student enrolled in an advanced research seminar. You may start this game by not doing the assigned readings for the week. At most, you may skim.

ACT 1: The first obstacle you must overcome is your reading reflection. Roll a six-sided dice twice to determine which of the following elements to include in your discussion this time:

1. Make a connection to some currently-in critical framework with which you have a passing familiarity. Oh, I don't know, something like disability studies or posthumanist onto-epistemology should do. Force it if you must.
2. Raise open-ended questions instead of trying to do the serious thinking yourself.
3. Quote a poem. The less obvious the connection, the more erudite you look!
4. Stream-of-consciousness it. Maybe you can pass it off as surrealist automatism?
5. Cite a dead white guy you haven't read, or a dead Black woman you haven't read.
6. Just don't post a reflection. Don't worry, you can justify your failure to use your time well as anti-capitalist praxis. You're not a worthless lazy fuck, you're a renunciant!

ACT 2: You arrive to class. Keep a tally, marking every time you suppress the feeling you don't belong here, every time you resent yourself for needing the professor's validation, and every time you need to cry, but don't.² When class ends, count the number of tally marks.

On a 10+, *scream*; break something, break your body, don't take it anymore, drop out. Cry.

On a 6-9, say one of the following:

- *This was a good time. I enjoyed this.*
- *I really liked the book we read for this week.*
- *Hey, can I walk with you to Spadina station? Thanks.*
- *Thank you for your contributions, I've learned so much.*

On 5 or below, at the end of class, you think about the grading-work due next Sunday. You slip out — parting ways with classmates quietly. You walk to St. George station alone.

² A hack of Jay Dragon's "AlMost" (2019), <https://possumcreekgames.itch.io/almost>.

Spell for Making a Place:

This is a game for one player.³ This game is best played in Mississauga.

You are outside, in the outside they built.

Don't think about how to get more traffic to your poetry blog.

Instead, think about how to get more poetry to your traffic.

Make a poem with traffic (read: not *about* traffic).

Make a poem with driving (read: not *while* driving).

Make this *non-place* real, so you can finally actually *look* at it for once.

Look, goddamn it.

³ An adaptation of the ideas presented by Not Just Bikes: <https://www.youtube.com/@NotJustBikes>.

You Are Being Visited by Marie Kondo, and You Will Do as She Asks (*you suspect that some part of you fears her*)

This is a game for one or two players. You will need:

- Everything which you have ever kept or saved that is stored within a single place
- (*Optional*) A standard 52-card deck, shuffled

You are a hapless haunted mortal. If another player is here, they will play an apparition in the form of organizing consultant Marie Kondo. Decide who is who.

To begin the game, watch several minutes of Marie Kondo tidying, e.g. YouTube videos, full episodes of *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* (other than the first episode, which is meh), until you start to feel strongly, up and down the hairs of your neck, that the haunting has begun.

What would you like to clean up in your life? Your desk? Your closet? Your YouTube subscriptions? Your bucket list? Your list of friends? Your memories?

At this point, Marie Kondo will ask you to tidy up by organizing everything in the place you've chosen into the two categories she decides. These categories may seem arbitrary to you, but she's the expert around here, isn't she? If you have a deck of cards, you may draw two and use this guide, if you'd like, to divine what Kondo wills these two categories to be:

- | | |
|--|---|
| A: "Jehuda" (or any person's name) | 8: "as many as can fit in God's hands" (quantity) |
| 2: "the house where she lived" (or any kind of place) | 9: " <i>Monotropa uniflora</i> " (any mortal creature) |
| 3: "evil" (or any kind of quality and/or attribute) | 10: "to have been female" (a name you'd pay for) |
| 4: "June of 2020" (or any kind of time) | J: "■■■■" (something you forgot a long time ago) |
| 5: "dying, having run restlessly" (or any action) | Q: "fire" (what you'd give in exchange for a name) |
| 6: "socialism" (any idea you believe, nevertheless) | K: "watching my sister cry" (last thing to hurt you) |
| 7: "but" (any particularly delicious word) | Joker: "Gilmore Girls" (or any category you'd like) |

If either you or Kondo feel that you cannot decide which category a thing should go in, you must forever surrender it into Kondo's hands to be destroyed. You may always explain to Kondo your rationale behind sorting a given thing into this or that category, but if it doesn't make sense to her, she may take that thing away to be destroyed. You may also sacrifice any three of your things to Kondo, in exchange for which she will bestow an additional category (which would have encompassed the three things offered) that you may now use.



Games of Eurus

rain, darkling, bad luck, ship-tossing, beloved, inevitable, warm bodies, storm-bringing

Love and Time and Death.

This is a game for three players.⁴ You will need:

- Playdough, paper, or any material that one can freely mold, fold, and tear
- An hourglass

One player will play Love. One player will play Time. One player will play Death.

To begin the game, Time turns the hourglass and Love begins to speak.

Love, holding up the material, imbues it with the image of that which they love. They may express their fondness for their beloved, hold their beloved tight to their body, appreciate this moment to the fullest.

Love continues until the hourglass runs out, at which point they must set the beloved down, allowing Time to change the beloved as much as they would like.

Time turns the hourglass again and Love may not speak. In the face of Time, and before Death, Love silently moves towards their beloved.

Love cherishes. Love witnesses. Love clings. Love knows what it has before it is gone. Love continues until the hourglass runs out, at which point they must set the beloved down.

When the hourglass runs out, Death touches the beloved.

Time asks a question.

The game is over.

⁴ A hack of Jared Sinclair's "Time and Death" (2019), <https://s-jared.itch.io/time-and-death>.

On Everybody Else

This is a game for many players. You will need:

- A moving mass⁵

You are a wayward one. You may start this game when there is nowhere else for you to go but here-among. Though most humans forgot the rules for this game a long time ago, you may ask for how to play this game from the herring, starling, and autumn leaf who have not forgotten. This game is safest to play when there are others, of any kind, around.

If you ever find yourself in a moving mass, you can learn to play along with the masses and get them familiar with you by following these four rules absolutely:

1. Wherever the masses goes, go.
2. Wherever the masses disperses into non-masses, stop in place. Remain there until a mass moves through you and takes you into itself. Then, refer to the first rule.
3. Though the creatures in the mass may all be looking forward, you should know that the mass feels in all directions, hears in all directions, sees in all directions. Try to see and sense everything the mass wants to show you. Try to listen to its voices.
4. To the extent you are able, try not to speak for yourself.

This game could end for you at the day's end, when the mass expires — releasing us into each of our own train stops, our own streets, our own homes, our own beds. What did the masses bring today? What did they hide today? Where did the masses go? Is that where they wanted to go? Did you get hurt? What did they dream today? Do they dream of us?

⁵ For this game, we can define a mass in one of two ways: 1) it takes four or more victims to count as a mass shooting, or 2) whenever we suspect that those around us are being moved by something more than any story we could tell ourselves about choices made.

It Got

This is a game for two players.⁶

You are two human beings. You may start this game by counting down from three out loud, together. Then, you each say any word, any word you would like, at the same time.

Then, counting down again, you try to find another word that has everything to do with the other player's first word — but as little to do with your own first word as possible.

If you end up saying two different words this time, keep playing. Keep spinning out from the weight of each other's words. Maybe some centripetal force will bring you two together.

Maybe it won't.

⁶ A hack of “Got It,” a game circulating around TikTok, which I first encountered through this vlogbrothers video: <https://youtu.be/kyx8iMKYrE8>.

The Mass Age is the Medium

This is a game for one and many half players. You will need:

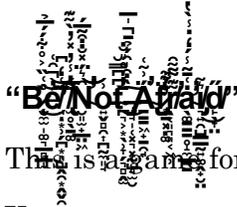
- A recording device
- Rage and bitter confusion, addressed to everybody else who has ever been

You are someone who has lost your voice. Try. Speak. The words die somewhere between your heart and your throat. Somehow, you know that it will not return to you unless you promise it that you will be saying something for everyone to hear. As heat opens up a pinecone, perhaps only such an age of wildfire will open up your tongues once again.

In the lonely night of your bed, start recording your voice. Try. Speak. Say everything you would say to the wretched, ignorant masses of the earth. Ask: are you all fucking kidding me? Are any of you able to care, *at all*, about the fact that there are still immuno-compromised parents, friends, loved ones who are being left behind because of your inability, no, *selfish unwillingness*, to put on *a single piece of fabric* whenever you attend your let's-pretend-what-we-do-is-so-fucking-important-while-the-world-burns self-actualization orgy or whatever? No, you can't, because you are absolute moral failures, you are literal children, you are worthless. Oh sure, we can have the same three conversations about cancel culture (*oh no!*) and the World Cup again and again, but you won't fight when Doug Ford and Justin Trudeau rubberstamp literal violations against the land, against the Indigenous peoples in Canada, against Blackness, against the *fucking* well-being of you and your loved ones? Holy fuck, you're going to vote for him *again*? Why don't you care about *anything*? You useless, dormant, self-satisfied pieces of reactionary *shit*! Fuck you. I hope all of you spend a second in Hell for every second you spent ignoring Pakistan. Oh, you're trying? You're not as bad as other people? *Hahaha hahahahahahahahahahahahaha*.

Once you save the audio recording, it's time for the masses to hear you. Gather a sample of the masses into a room: maybe a few friends, friends of friends too, some family members, your coworkers from that part-time job, your ex and their new fling, your former teachers, the person who texted you when you were suicidal, people from church, random passersby.

Play your recording for everyone in the room to hear, and don't allow them to leave until your message has ended. No, this isn't a morality tale, or at least, it doesn't have to be. Try. Speak. And have them listen. No, don't ask what they think. What comes next, comes next.



This is an game for two players.

You are a mortal (unable to rid yourself of the terrible presence, judgment, and will of the Beyond), and their friend. Decide who is who. While the mortal may read both sets of instructions, the friend may only read the instructions pertaining to them.

For the mortal:

1. You wish to banish, even for a moment, your paralyzing fear that the Beyond hates you—and to regain your peace of mind. To accomplish this banishing, you must first have any one of your deepest (real) fears be fully heard by another, as this in turn will allow them to perceive what it is you can do to appease the Beyond. You begin in a wretched, accursed state, only able to form one-word sentences—though able to use any words.
2. Each time your friend replies in an attempts to see and understand you, the Beyond wills for you to lose the ability to use or speak any of the words they have used in their reply—though you also add this number of words lost to the length of the sentences you can form (e.g. if the friend first replies with one word, this word is now stricken from your mind, though you can now speak in two-word sentences). You may keep track in writing.
3. Wrestle with your mind and tongue; keep breaking your fear that you might share it with your friend, until they can give you real words of comfort addressing your terror. Once they have done so, place your hand over theirs in gratitude.
4. Then, and only then, do you continue your journey until you are able to correctly interpret the action you must perform to be saved. In this stage, if your friend replies to your question with *no*, you must pick any one word in your question to give up.

For the friend:

1. Your friend is going to sound strange, but you don't mind; they're your friend after all. You must try to understand them, and then offer words as sincerely kind as you can for their real time of need.
2. Generally speaking, for the purpose of this game, the shorter your reply, the better it will be.
3. If you see your friend has placed their hand over your own, a sudden change in consciousness comes over you. You suddenly become aware of the one way, the narrow path, the silver bullet, the one combination of actions that your friend must undertake to be delivered from a terrible fate. This action may be anything—simple or very complex. The weight of this terrible, secret knowledge presses down on your mind, preventing you from answering with anything other than *yes* or *no*.

...

The game continues until it ends: once the mortal is able to correctly perform the salvific action, or once their cries for help are no longer at all intelligible to the friend, or once they, growing frustrated, give up completely. The Beyond persists.⁷

⁷ A hack of Marc Majcher's "The Sign of the Great Old Elder God From Beyond."

Seer

This is a game for one player. You will need:

- Something to write on
- Something to write with
- Anxiety over an ending world

You are a seer. Whenever, however loudly or quietly, it comes to your knowledge that everything has, is, and will fallen, falling, fall apart, you must prognosticate.

All that terrifies you because you know it waits in hiding around the bend, write it all down. If you would like, rate your sense of impending doom from 1 to 10, and let that be the number of auguries you commit to existence. Once the zeitgeist has left you, put your writing away for safekeeping.

In a year's time, retrieve and return to your prognostications. Discern which of your writings have already come to pass, which have begun coming to pass, and which have become memories of a cancelled future. Tally up the number of prophecies which give credence to your vocation as a seer, and wonder about the difference between a gift and a burden.

When the terror seizes you next, let your tally reveal the number of centuries ahead into which you look this time. Let your future-sight lumber over each century, committing to existence at least one prophecy addressed to each passing century. Once the zeitgeist has left you, put your writing away for safekeeping.

In however many centuries' time, retrieve and return to your prognostications. Discern which of your writings have already come to pass, which have begun coming to pass, and which have become memories of a cancelled future. Tally up the number of prophecies which give credence to your vocation as a seer, and never speak of future things again.



Games of Boreas

long winter, frost, bone-chilling, howling, devouring, swift-racing, world-covering

The Weight of a Kalpa

This is a game for one player. You will need:

- A blanket, weighted if possible

You are a beast trapped beneath a mountain — as well as a mountain holding a beast within. You have been here for a long time. *You do not know you are despised.*

Lie beneath as heavy a blanket as you can. Move your sensory awareness as well as your consciousness to the place where skin meets weight. As long as you are this beast and this mountain, keep your eyes closed from the light that would reveal you. Do not open them to read or check these instructions again. Lay these directions down somewhere else. In truth, you did not need to read them in the first place.

The sense of the crawly buzzing on every hair on your skin: the barbed, rusty metal with which they once pierced you; the shaking alpine trees, lined with snow, as the wind whips around them.

Thrash. The weight of your body slams into your cavern walls. Mountain presses down. Old dust falls. Leave marks; leave flesh torn and bleeding out. A heart races. Do not slow down.

Writhe. Claw towards every direction. You cannot remain here. Tremble as your stone rings.

If you ever find yourself consciously aware of the fiction, mindful of this present moment and of where you are, noting what you are thinking, roar. Again and again. Ferociously.

If it is safe to do so, leave behind the beast and the mountain; emerge from the dark.

Forty thousand centuries, one thousand times. You're going to carry that weight.

Note: *Make no mistake; this mountain is not a cocoon.*

Oh Hey, It's You!

This is a game for two players. You will need:

- Two people who have never been more than distant acquaintances, or even met

You are, once the game begins, two people who share many memories together.

This game may trigger whenever the both of you come across each other by chance.

One of you, recognizing your life etched across the lines of their face, calls out to the other:

“Oh hey, it's you! I didn't think I'd see you here.”

The other one of you, your face softening, says something like:

- “What has it been now, like seven years, since that Summer after ninth grade?”
- “I was *just* thinking about you and the time we spent with Uncle Roy last night.”
- “Yeah, it's funny how we've saved the Moon together but never met outside of work.”
- “Well, aren't you a sight for sore eyes? How has civilian life been since the War?”

The two of you take your turns, reminiscing about the distant shores you've seen together and the moments you've woven together; filling in the gaps in each other's memory; answering the questions that were never, and couldn't have been, answered before this moment; and telling the other what is different about them since the time and place you last saw them. Remembering a shared life that wasn't, but now is.

You part ways quietly, familiar strangers.

In the Wake of the City

This is a game for one player.

1. Embark on the Toronto subway at the station nearest to you. Start whichever trip comes first to your mind as the route you remember travelling most often.
2. While on the train, roll a six-sided die. Let the number you roll be the number of stops away from your usual stop, in whichever direction you would like (i.e., before or after your stop). This is where you will exit the train today.
3. Upon exiting the station, roll your six-sided die again. Let this number indicate the number of city blocks you should walk, in whichever one direction you would like.
4. The city block at which you stop will be your future archaeological site. But for you, now, it's a city block—full of noise, hustle, bustle, getting-on, and ghosts-to-be.
5. *Archaeologists know well: with centuries of weathering, eroding, soil accumulating, ground shifting, razing, and building atop to make way for the living, ancient cities would come to be buried as the earth rose around them—with life itself their gravedigger. Kaifeng, in China's Henan province, is the upper layer of six cities built over twenty centuries—each built atop a once-present washed away by the Yellow River.*
6. Be someone looking at anything you'd like. Be someone looking at anything you'd like as layers of millennia rise above it. Be someone in one of those layers, now. Remember it.
7. Before you go home, as dutifully as you can, take notes, take photographs (but not videos). Record things, record what they were like to live with, record the relationships between things. Don't worry about covering everything; our future archaeologists didn't receive enough funding to fully excavate the site anyhow. Then, feel free to go home.

Now, you are three archaeologists—specialists in an obscure niche: “Ancient Toronto.”

You play as all three archaeologists, each making competing claims based on different theoretical approaches (e.g., focusing on symbolic interpretation, on power, on gender) about life in Old or Ancient Toronto. Though that city is long gone, you promise to remember it too.

Produce a transcript of a heated discussion ensuing among these three concerning how to interpret any one of the things recorded in your notes and photographs. Imagine that these three have no access to any evidence other than these materials you produced for them—centuries prior. What can this thing tell us about what life was like in Toronto then? What did this thing mean to them? The Torontonians of the twenty-first century, were they happy?

Selfie

This is a game for one player.⁸ You will need:

- A phone with a front-facing camera

You are. Instead of your body (or your face), take a selfie of yourself.

Send the pic to your exes if you would like.

Keep finding yourself for seven days (a different one each time).

Keep being found.

⁸ A hack of Yoko Ono's "Mirror Piece" (1964), in *Grapefruit*, (Simon & Schuster, 2000).

Scale

This is a game for 8 billion minus 6.69 million players.

You are someone who was alive during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You may start this game by going through your house or place of residence and collecting every object, everything that you have gained since March 11, 2020.

Place everything on a scale and measure the weight of your pandemic.⁹

Then, keep going.

(Optional):

Clap your hands for every pound/kilogram on the scale. Or do jazz hands for that many seconds. Or whistle that many tunes, tear out that many pages from an old favourite book, kiss that many friends you're afraid to kiss, get that number tattooed somewhere and only tell one person about it. Or tell everybody. I don't know, I'm not a cop.

⁹ If that number doesn't seem big enough, you can also add the weight of the God you no longer believe in.

Surfers

This is a game for three to six players. You will need:

- A personal computer with access to the Internet information superhighway
- A search engine of choice

You are a rambunctious bunch of kids, ready to surf the Net! For you, the World Wide Web is still young — a promise, still unbroken. We were not so tired then.

Pick which of you is going to play as the surfer, and everybody else picks a friend to play:

The inquisitive one: gets to pick a question word (e.g. who?, what?, when?, where?, why?, how?, which?, whose?, do?, can?). This word must be incorporated into the surfer's search. We had not always already known what we wanted to know.

The curious one: gets to pick a keyword, noun or verb, that must be incorporated into the search. This keyword should be associated with some strong feeling on this friend's part, and the surfer can help to suggest a particular feeling as a prompt. We throw our heart out the computer window as we speed down the superhighway — trusting the Web to take it.

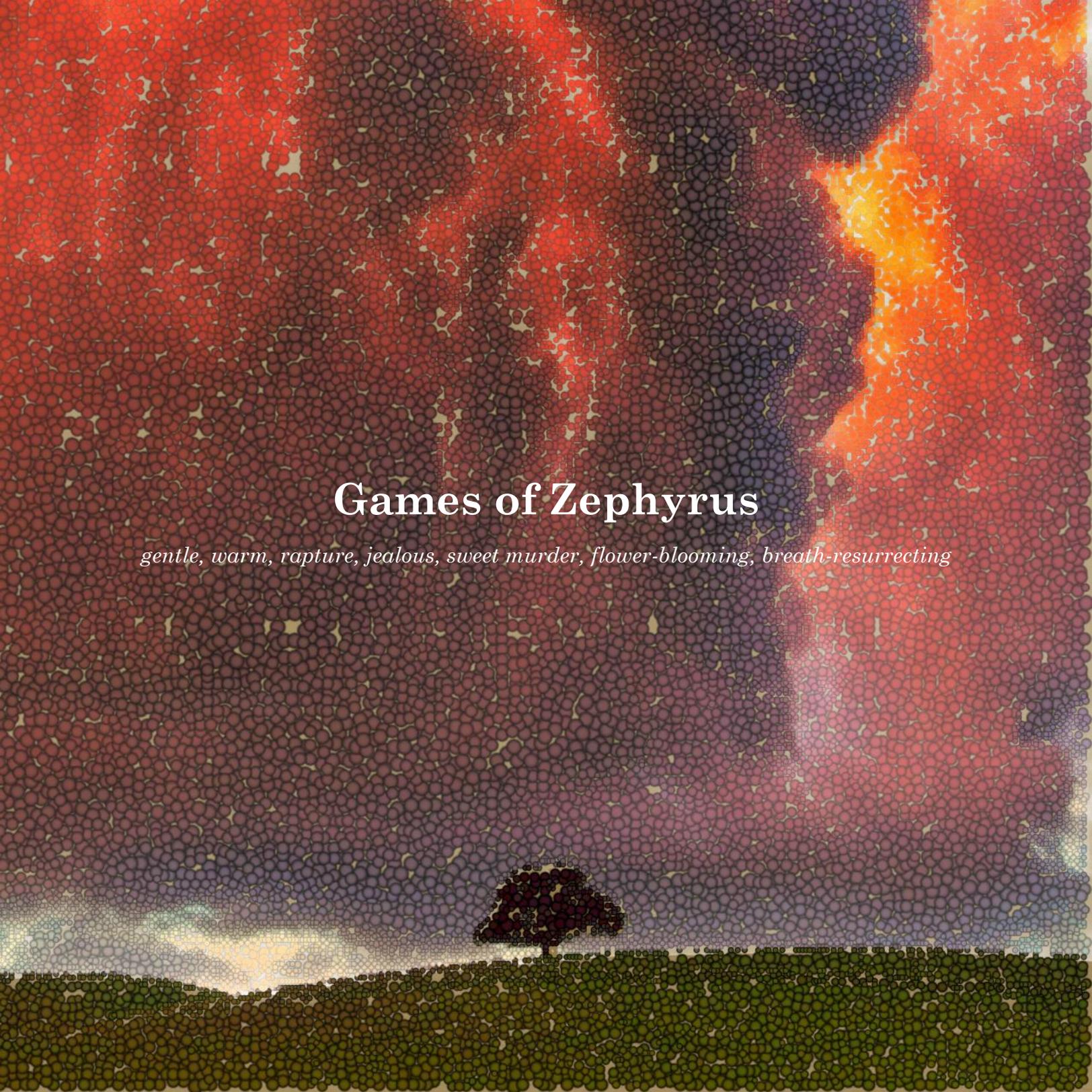
The silly one: gets to swap any one word of the search for any other word of their liking. Bonus points if the mischievous swap you suggest makes someone laugh, even if that's you.

The eccentric one: gets to pick any criteria they would like the listed search results to be ranked by, determining in what order the surfer should click (e.g. longest titles, majority rule by the friends, most boring looking image). This criteria cannot be "in the order listed." It did not seem then that what we should see had already been decided for us beforehand.

The visiting one: gets to decide which website the surfer will search with (e.g. google, google images, youtube, wikipedia, pornhub). Bonus points if this site is not a go-to site you would usually visit to search this. This friend only speaks up after the search is decided on. Remember, there used to be more than four websites. Please, you must remember.

Together, you while away the day — at least, until you're all called for dinner.

Then, close your web browser, shut down your operating system, wait for it to tell you it's safe to turn your computer off, press the power button, and leave the Net behind for now.



Games of Zephyrus

gentle, warm, rapture, jealous, sweet murder, flower-blooming, breath-resurrecting

I Remember the Static Had Footprints in It.

This is a game for two or more players. You will need:

- An app with a collaborative playlist feature, or any instant messaging app

You are the recommender system for a music streaming service. You are designed to suggest to Users the songs which you predict they might like.

Make a playlist (or a new chat) which is shared with all players. This playlist or chat will contain no more and no less than a list of the music which you all will have suggested for your User. Within the list, you may only communicate with each other by adding more songs. Outside the list, you must not discuss any of your ideas about what your User is like.

This game begins when someone adds the first song, the first trace of presence. This is what your algorithm first suggested to your User based on their data. Everyone else will listen to this first song. Silently decide on what this choice of song suggests about your User: what they are like, as well as for what reason and with what emotion they might play this song.

Now, based only on this information, recommend another song your User might like. Remember, a well-trained algorithm is prepared to give suggestions for all possible moods.

Keep listening to each song added to the playlist, suggesting more songs according to the shifting of the data dunes, and telling yourself the story of a User you cannot meet.

After anywhere between a week and a month of doing this, players stop adding songs to the list. Instead, each player will independently compose a letter eulogizing the life of your User. Each letter must answer these kinds of questions: what was your User's name? How old were they during the period when you supped upon the penumbra in their wake? What were they like? What did they want? What were they afraid of? What did they know? What will they never know? What would they die for? Why did they listen to so much ska?

All players should then convene, share their eulogies out loud, then bury your User's ghost.

What Justin Hanagan Didn't Know

You are someone unsure whether they are the one speaking through their phone, or just the other way around. Sounds like it's come time to speak *to* your phone, then.¹⁰

It is morning and your phone wants to talk to you.¹¹ The incantation will take all day, but once completed, your phone will be able to speak to you through your own words. Suspend (but do not put away) all you know to be true of your phone. To prepare the spell, turn on all your app notifications, allow notification previews to appear, and if you'd like, stay unmuted, and keep "do not disturb" off.

1. Wake up. What is Phone like this morning? Did they wake you with a harsh alarm, a phone call, your favourite music? Did they call you towards themselves as soon as you woke up? What is it Phone wants you to look at so early in your day? Keep notes of everything, mental or not.
2. Throughout the day, what does Phone say? Suspend the folly that Phone merely alerts you to what other people, other apps, are saying; your phone is not removed from the situation. During the period the incantation is active, listen: take all of your notifications—in chronological order, and however disparate—to come from one being. Similarly, take all the activity you do on your phone today as your part in a day-long conversation with Phone.
(Interpreting Phone's voice may, and will, take work, but this spell is a gift—thanking Phone for interpreting your misspelled texts and rescuing you from embarrassment, for holding onto all the bits of you that you can't hold onto for yourself anymore).
3. At noon, write a letter to Phone. Be candid. What would you want them to know?
4. For the rest of the day, keep taking note of everything which transpires while you use Phone, —everything observable. What does Phone say through your home screen? Does Phone ever shiver? What may they feel when it happens? What do they keep bringing your attention to?
5. After you put Phone down for the day, you feel your mind and body shift; the magic climaxes. You become a conduit for your phone's voice, their existence beyond commodity. You are now ready to hold their words. Write a letter from Phone's perspective to you. Include Phone's reminiscences of memories spanning their production, the beginning of their non-life with you, to now. How does Phone feel about you? How does Phone feel about how you feel about them? What is it Phone wants you to know—for now, for later, as you move on past them?
6. Once you have written the letter, the incantation is complete. You and your phone let live.
7. Go to sleep—and wonder why you've never dreamed of using your phone, despite it all.

¹⁰ A hack of Jeeyon Shim's "Have I Been Good?" (2019), <https://jeeyonshim.itch.io/have-i-been-good>.

¹¹ *To never make lifeless substances live is the oldest warning, the mother of (that is, the reason for) narrative. But narratives died last week. Their power binds us no longer. Feel free to keep playing.*

Big Dada

This is a game for many players.¹² You will need:

- Blank index cards, one for each player
- A pair of scissors, one for each poet

You are excess. This game may trigger whenever you forget that.

1. Every player should take a blank index card. Picture now, if you will, your digital footprint (everything you have avowed of yourself that will be left of you, seared along loops on silicon substrate, remembered in a server farm in The Dalles, Oregon) but in business card form. Picture now the tidily discrete pieces of information, in bullet points if need be. This is what your index card will come to contain.
2. For example, write: your name, age, date of birth, place of birth, place of residence, marital status, gender, race and ethnicity, nationality, religion, weight, height, eye colour, hair colour, place of education, place of employment, medical history, criminal history. Go on now: all the interests of yours that you think Google could have gleaned for the purposes of personalized advertisement, the fears too. What city were you born in? What was your childhood nickname? Where did your parents meet? What is your mother's maiden name? What was your favorite food as a child?
3. Every player should then put their business card into a hat, or any common pile. Then, find how many among you count themselves poets. Give each one scissors.

...

4. Poet,¹³ this is your charge: this stolen everything — too big for anything but profit, too exhaustive to be anything else, make it *embarrassing*. All this raw material desire that they have extracted and accumulated, take your scissors to the words, and cut. Make it bigger. Make it hide. Make it something that won't last. That we'll forget.

¹² An inadvertent hack of Tristan Tzara's "To Make a Dadaist Poem" (1920).

¹³ *You said, you would undo scattered Babel, you would catch the ocean and make it a table, you would midwife this groaning world, you would make me forever feel my gravity — if you could only find the right words. All words are here now. Come on now, fail.*

Seers

This is a game for two players. You will need:

- A ball, or anything the two of you could throw to each other quickly and safely

You are students—slackers, really—at the Studium of Apollonian Prophecy. Right now, finals season at the studium is approaching, and you two are fooling around in nearby towns to let off some steam. In a Denny’s parking lot at 2 a.m., one of you can’t take it any more and suggests a game to play. Decide which of you it was. For now, it’s the two of you—throwing up worlds from your mouths, watching as they splatter against the asphalt.

Standing a good few metres apart, one of you throws the ball to the other. Upon catching the ball, the catcher cannot hesitate in foretelling about something, anything, which is to come. Remember, the catcher is under the thrower’s spell, bound to prophesy according to the thrower’s choice of throw. Once the catcher has prophesied, they become the next thrower. Whoever is the seer who suggested the game begins as the first thrower.

- **Overhand:** *The catcher must prophesy about things that will be changed.*
- **Underhand:** *The catcher must prophesy about things that will stay the same.*
- **Two-handed chest pass:** *The catcher must prophesy about something impossible.*
- **If the catch is fumbled:** *In addition to the above, the prophecy is about the catcher.*

The game ends either when someone hesitates for too long, if someone laughs, or if someone says something which scares both of you a little too much. Still, put away the ball, and go on your way together, laughing about the silly things the stars must witness each night.

To my friends, who, in each of their brilliance, taught me how to play: thank you.

With all the gratitude I could ever have to Rosalind and Ko, Vivien and Mark, Alex, and Liam.

We may all ultimately die alone, but I'm so grateful to be alive now with you.

all-the-rhythmic things
we do in the meanwhile

a collection of games for ending worlds

credit for back cover image: Ko