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# **The visible Life**



A coming-of-age story



TO MY MOTHER AND MY SISTER

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# INTRODUCTION

## FROM A CRISIS TO THE VISION OF THIS PROJECT

"Quarter Life Crisis" is the term for a psychological crisis relating to the pressures of an individual in early adulthood that is "coming-of-age" (Hasyim et al., 2024). During the global pandemic in 2020, I was 26 and fully entangled in such a state of mind I can retrospectively confirm. Just having finished my bachelor of *Geosciences*, I had no proper place to stay and no concrete plan on how to proceed with my life.

One day, I found a box with all my diaries from the recent years and decades. Reading through these archives of my past experiences, I gained interesting insights and a deeper understanding of how I became who I am. A strong curiosity about grasping my own development arose and gradually, I started feeling like a Palaeontologist digging through the strata of the Earth's surface, drawing conclusions on the evolution of life on this

planet. That is how the idea of this project arose: I liked the idea that there is a parallel between ontogeny of an individual organism (like myself) and the phylogeny of life as a whole. What if we perceive the astonishing evolution throughout the Phanerozoic eon as the “coming of age” of life as a whole and humans as a “project of life” to understand its own developments - comparable to me understanding my past through my diaries?

A little spoiler alert: The intense examination with myself had an effect of enhancing my inner turmoil, deepening my sense of crisis during this quarter-life challenge. Today, I can happily confirm that I overcame this crisis and - as a little part in the unity of life - I wish to provide a tiny little contribution for life to also overcome its crises with this project.

## BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THIS PROJECT

When the Earth formed from accretion of cosmic matter around 4.6 billion years ago, it was just another planet drifting through the dark expanses of the universe. However, around 3.8 billion ago, the Earth turned into the most remarkable body in space (we know): Since then, life shapes, life characterizes, life *makes* this planet. The evolution of life is a story of transformation and resilience: While life remained rather inconspicuous (mainly in the form of single celled organisms) for the first ~3 billion years, the time of *visible* life quite suddenly began to kick-off in the Phanerozoic eon. During the *Cambrian explosion*, an “evolutionary storm” gave momentum to an astonishing diversification of lifeforms (see Fox, 2016) and within a comparably short timespan all phyla we know today emerged (Budd & Jackson, 2016). From the primordial simplicity of its origins to the complex tapestry of ecosystems and individual organisms -

like you and me – that exist today, life is both a unity and a multitude.

With this project, I seek to bridge the vastness of this narrative with the intimacy of (my) human experience, blending scientific insight, artistic expression, poetic reflection and philosophical inquiry. By offering readers a perspective that transcends the human, I want to invite empathy for life as a whole and a deeper feeling of our place within it. The foundation of this work lies in my conviction that humanity's disconnection from nature is one of the greatest obstacles in addressing today's ecological crises (see e.g. Latour, 2017). This alienation stems from the "modern condition" - a deeply entrenched dualism between nature and culture, a perception that places humanity outside the natural world rather than as an integral part of it (Latour, 2012). With this project, I want to invite my readers to dissolve this division, fostering a sense of belonging and empathy with life that transcends the boundaries of



human existence. By drawing parallels between the ontogeny of an individual and the phylogeny of life as a whole, I seek to provide a fresh perspective on life through which readers can connect to the unity of existence. This work is a poetic exploration of life's journey through the *Phanerozoic* eon, a term derived from Greek meaning 'the time of *visible life*'. It provides "snippets" of an imagined diary that chronicles the evolution of life from its "adolescence" in the Cambrian seas to its current form in the human-induced ecological crisis of the Anthropocene. In doing so, it offers a metaphorical coming-of-age story for life itself, reflecting humanity's struggle to understand its role in the broader web of existence.

#### THE GAIA THEORY AS A KEY FRAMEWORK

The *Gaia hypothesis*, as articulated by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis (1974), provides a critical framework for this work. According to their vision, all living things are interconnected as a self-

regulating superorganism of planetary scale that has crucially maintained the planet's habitability throughout the intertwined evolution of the planet and life. This idea resonates deeply with the project's aim to portray life as a unity—a single entity evolving, adapting, and reflecting upon itself.

The shared evolutionary heritage of all life is impressively illustrated by the *tree of life* which is tracing all living organisms back to a single common ancestor (Maddison et al., 2007). The *Endosymbiotic Theory* (Margulis, 1970, 2008) further demonstrates how cooperation among primitive organisms led to the evolution of complex eukaryotic cells, highlighting the role of symbiosis in life's development. In fact, organisms can hardly be viewed as single entities, but as *holobionts* (the organism plus its persistent symbionts equals one ecological unit) (e.g. Roughgarden et al., 2018). This is not only true for the flagship multispecies symbiosis of lichens

(Grimm et al., 2021) but also for humans and their associated microbiome (Gilbert, 2014).

While the Gaia theory was confronted with strong gusts of criticism from the scientific community (e.g. Kirchner, 2002; Volk, 2002), the holobiont-perception is a widely accepted theoretical framework that allows to model the Gaia superorganism as a complex holobiont unit that is a logical outcome of the metabolic systems of all life interacting in the “common breath” (Weber, 2017) of the Earth-encompassing atmosphere (Gilbert, 2023). The unifying idea of the Gaia Theory is also supported by Fritjof Capra (2014), describing life as a “web of relationships” where each element influences and is influenced by the whole. Yet, he chose to give his approach a different scientific name: *“The systems view of life”*. These scientific concepts of network views on ecological systems are philosophically expanded by the *deep ecology* movement (e.g. Naess, 2017), which provides an ethical perspective,

emphasizing the intrinsic value of all life forms and their interdependence. This aligns with the *Actor-Network Theory* of Bruno Latour (2012), which challenges anthropocentric views of agency and calls for recognition of the intertwined reality of human and non-human actors in shaping the world.

Synthesising scientific and social implications of the Gaia theory, Lenton and Latour (2018) integrate human agency into the self regulation of life confronted with the challenges of the Anthropocene. They call for a new state of Gaia: *Gaia 2.0*, in which humans contribute their collective knowledge for the sake of the whole web of life. They claim that with our technologies, we have the power add self-awareness to the self-regulation of the Gaian system. I claim that for the success of this idea, we need to develop a deeper sense of belonging to the web of existence and this work should be regarded as a contribution to this.

## THE POETICS OF EARTH'S HISTORY AS A KEY NARRATIVE

Providing a poetic reflection of a timespan comprising more than 540 million years, this work draws inspiration from authors who integrate geological deep time with poetic and narrative forms to convey the history of life and the Earth (e.g. Macfarlane, 2019; McPhee, 1981; Völker, 2021). The concept of *deep time*, which explores the gradual yet profound transformations shaping Earth's surface and life, forms a central theme of my work. Geological events, from mass extinctions to tectonic shifts, are understood as dual forces—destructive yet deeply creative—serving as a reminder of the resilience and adaptability inherent in life. These approaches align with broader ideas in *geopoetics*, as articulated by Kenneth White (2003), who emphasizes the integration of natural rhythms, human consciousness, and creative expression. By fostering a synthesis of ecological awareness and cultural imagination, geopoetics provides a

framework for engaging with the vastness of Earth's history and translating it into accessible, evocative narratives.

This work also draws from the poetics of the Anthropocene, which examines humanity's profound geological impact and its representation in literature. Timothy Clark (2015), for example, explores how literature tackles the challenges of the Anthropocene and underscores the need for creative frameworks to address its complexities. Furthermore, the narrative approach of this work is enriched by the concept of *ecomimesis* (Morton, 2009), which employs literary strategies to evoke ecological interconnectedness and simulate the dynamics of natural processes. By reflecting the relational nature of life, *ecomimesis* highlights the rhythms of Earth's history and evolution.

These interdisciplinary ideas provide a narrative framework for my project, where poetic language is supposed to transform abstract geological concepts into emotionally resonant stories. By

framing life's evolution as a diary, I want to foster a sense of intimacy with life's journey through the Phanerozoic while bridging the cognitive and emotional gaps between human experience and deep time.

#### LITERATURE AND ART AS A MEDIUM FOR EMPATHY

My personal experience of emotional connectedness to nature and landscape was profoundly shaped by Hermann Hesse's *Wanderungen* (1920), a book that masterfully blends art, personal musings, nature observations, and philosophical insights. Through evocative descriptions of landscapes, simple aquarelle paintings, and poetry, Hesse conveys a deep sense of spiritual connection to the natural world, inspiring me to see nature as a source of healing and self-discovery. This genuine experience of empathy through art and literature directly influenced the structure of this work. Each chapter mirrors *Wanderungen* in its format, opening with a

simple painting with a loose *connection* to a prose diary-style text, rounded off with a poem. The paintings are supposed to appear like a spontaneous sketch made by the narrating being of each chapter. To add a unique dimension, each chapter begins with a brief scientific introduction based on Oschmann (2021), offering readers an understanding of the pivotal incidents from the corresponding period.

Another notable source of inspiration is Rachel Carson's *The Sea Trilogy* (1941, 1951, 1955), which similarly demonstrates the power of literature to evoke empathy with the natural world. Through poetic language and scientific rigor, Carson captures the beauty and intricacy of marine ecosystems, inviting her readers to experience a profound connection with the "more-than-human" world. Her work is a compelling example, how artful prose can transform scientific knowledge into emotional resonance and strongly influenced the narrative-style of this project.



By weaving together art, literature, and scientific insights, my work reflects the idea that while science provides the tools to understand the mechanisms of life, art and poetry offer a way to feel its essence. The capacity of poetry and art to evoke emotional resonance is rooted in its ability to bridge the cognitive and affective domains, engaging both intellect and emotion (Langer, 2009).

Inviting readers to imagine the world through the eyes and minds of other beings, I build upon Val Plumwood's (2005) call for embracing non-human perspectives in literature. This aligns with Martha Nussbaum's (1998) concept of *narrative imagination* which underscores the ethical potential of literature and poetry, emphasizing their ability to cultivate empathy by presenting perspectives beyond one's own. Jonathan Bate (2000) further argues that poetry possesses an "ecological power" that can reconnect humans to the natural world by invoking awe and wonder. This

also resonates with the concept of *ecological thought* by Timothy Morton (2010), which emphasizes interconnectedness and encourages readers to perceive the “ecological mesh” that binds all living beings.

By offering views from different perspectives of creatures that are to be imagined by the reader, my goal is to give life itself a voice, fostering a sense of unity and empathy across species boundaries. Inviting readers to see themselves not as separate observers but as active participants in the ongoing narrative of life. The goal is for readers to occasionally forget the human perspective and instead feel a deeper kinship with the “more-than-human” world. By blending poetic techniques with art and scientific insights, the work underscores the role of imagination in cultivating a sense of belonging to the larger biosphere.

## EMPATHY AND THE ANTHROPOCENE

The final chapter of my project addresses the Anthropocene, a conceptual period defined by humanity's profound impact on Earth's systems. The overwhelming scale of the Anthropocene is vividly conveyed with the concept of *hyperobjects* (Morton, 2013) – vast entities, such as climate change, radioactive materials or microplastics, that are massively distributed in time and space, making it impossible to fully comprehend their influence on the Earth system. Morton argues that addressing these challenges requires recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings. He identifies ecological philosophy, art, and ethics as essential for reshaping our understanding and responses to the profound challenges of the Anthropocene.

My chapter on the Anthropocene is not a full examination of the various problems concerning the Anthropocene but rather some of spontaneous thoughts on the absurdities of modern society that are drawn from a diary written during an excursion

with my former university. However, the chapter critiques the paradoxical and destructive tendencies of human consumption and the alienation that perpetuates it. With this chapter, I want to promote Donna Haraway's (2016) call for "staying with the trouble" and invite to confront the challenges of our time with creativity and care, rather than retreat into despair or denial.

Drawing on the ideas of thinkers like James Lovelock (2019) and Oliver Völker (2016), I wish to frame the Anthropocene as both a crisis and an opportunity: A moment for humanity to reflect, reconnect, and take responsibility as stewards of the planet.

Summing up, this project is not only a poetic reflection of my personal journey but also a tribute to life's "coming of age" story. By weaving together conceptual threads of deep time, scientific discovery, artistic expression, and philosophical inquiry, I aim to bridge the divide between humanity and the natural world. At its heart, this project aims to evoke empathy for the unity of life and inspire a deeper awareness of our role within the web of existence. Just as I emerged from my own quarter-life crisis with a renewed sense of purpose, I hope this project will serve as a small but meaningful contribution to confronting the crises of our time with creativity, connection, and care.

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## PRECAMBRIAN

Vast empty space  
vaguely swirls  
a versifying mist  
awkwardly forms  
driving forces  
boldly pull  
racing fragments  
smash, congeal  
pulsate, reveal  
connect, unite  
into impossible form  
unheard-of chance:

I WAS FINALLY BORN.

At first, I was very unremarkable. Withdrawn, I revelled in the nourishing waters of hot springs, volcanic pools, and deep-sea vents. Today, I have almost forgotten them. When I discovered the exhilarating power of sunlight, I largely abandoned those inhospitable places and settled in colourful communities along the shores of vast shallow seas.

I WAS SCARCELY AWARE:

Through my breath alone, my surroundings filled with oxygen. Soon, I felt the vitality of this lovely gas coursing through my clustered cells, making me pliant, lively, and eager to transform. How effortlessly the atoms gathered around me back then, forming into the most whimsical shapes.

BUT THEN, IT WAS TIME FOR A BACKBONE.

With the Phanerozoic, the age of visible life, my development gained an entirely new momentum starting with the Cambrian explosion. An overwhelming abundance of events led to an evolution of variety and vitality that I could have never envisioned.

IT BEGAN IN THE SEA.

While I first remained anchored to the seafloor, filtering the salty water, soon my clumsy little legs

left countless tracks in the soft sand. Leisurely, I drifted through sunlit surface waters and, not long after, swam nimbly through the endless expanses of the vast ocean.

THEN I CONQUERED THE LAND.

At first, I marvelled humbly at the immense dimensions of the mountainous reaches. But soon, I myself swayed my massive leaves gracefully in the wind. With sturdy legs and a mighty jaw, I roared through the desert, grew wings and soared jubilantly into the skies.

VITALITY! I STROVE FOR EVER MORE VITALITY.

Gracefully, I leapt with pointed fins from the water, swung laughing through misty rainforests, and glided shrieking in the warm updrafts over lofty mountains. Contented, I stretched my damp nose toward the sun and laid in the shade, massaging my belly full of fruits.

BUT WHAT WAS THE MEANING OF IT ALL?

I never took the time to reflect on these intense developments or to understand them. Gradually, I felt an urge to pause, to confront these sweeping changes.

I BEGAN A PROJECT OF SELF-REFLECTION.

With reason and intellect, I sought to interpret, understand, and trace the wonders of the world and my own development through my records. At first, I was delighted by the profound insights into my past that this project afforded me.

BUT THEN, IT BECAME DANGEROUS.

It gained a momentum of its own, alienating me from myself to a degree of cold self-destruction that grew increasingly disturbing. It broke over me so suddenly and mercilessly that I no longer know what is happening to me.

IS THERE A WAY OUT OF THESE CRISES?

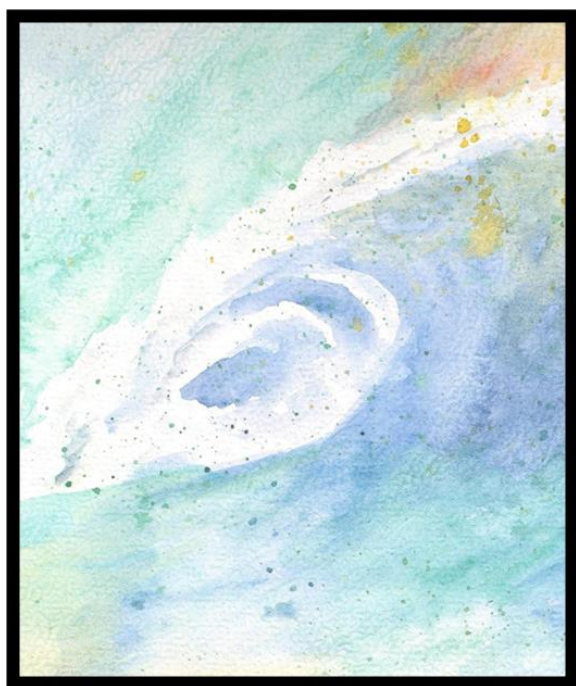
In my development, I have often endured painful ruptures, leaving much behind. But this time, the turmoil strikes with a ferocity and unpredictability unlike anything I have experienced before. I believe it now requires mindfulness, composure, and courage to master these seemingly untameable crises and to stride in unity towards a better future with renewed energy and greater respect for myself.





CAMBRIAN

*During the Cambrian period, the Earth began to warm after a long, mighty ice age, causing sea levels to rise and flooding large areas of the continents with shallow seas. In these areas, a variety of new animal phyla emerged quite rapidly, known as the "Cambrian Explosion." Life forms suddenly became very complex, with the development of swimming organisms, sensory organs like eyes, and predatory species. At the same time, the first burrowing creatures began to reshape the sea floor, creating new ecological niches.*





There was no one around us for miles. Just us, the sea, and the snow-white shore. Clear and pure as the sand, the shallow water around us was just as pristine. It was so crystal-clear that we could watch everything swim, everyone crawl and some of them dig. When the gaze wandered through the water towards the horizon, it gently shifted from a light turquoise to a deep azure, until it eventually plunged into the midnight blue of the vast ocean.

The water's surface was perfectly still, thanks to a strong offshore wind. It shimmered with just a few ripples, as if it had goosebumps. The waves, rolling toward us in fine, orderly lines, built up steeply, broke with a thunderous crash, and left behind a long trail of tiny droplets, scattering the sunlight into all the colours of the rainbow, enveloping the air in a fine, spicy mist.

We swam dreamily between these powerful water mountains, curiously observing the incredible variety of forms the world presented to us. We played, splashed, and darted about in the shallows, always alert, careful not to be swept away by the energy of the broken waves.

Suddenly, I jolted awake as darkness enveloped me. A glance at the bright blue sky reassured me that it was no cloud. Then I looked beneath me: I was drifting above a large, black shadow with a

long, pointed sting. Panicked, I tried to escape in haste. But it kept getting darker. I looked up and saw the massive wave breaking over me.

In slow motion, I watched the crest of the wave sweep across the sky. The bright orange of the sun blended with the deep blue of the falling watery curtain, transforming the entire world into a glimmering green. For a brief moment, I was enclosed in a hollow space behind the rushing mass of water. Then, I was ruthlessly swept up by the energy of the wide ocean, tossed around wildly like a puppet, flung through the sea. I lost consciousness.

My next memory is waking up with an indescribable satisfaction in the shallow sand. The sensation of seeing the closing water curtain above me. The green sun shining pleasantly through the thin layer of water. The silence and warmth of this brief embrace from the sea.

My senses had fulfilled their purpose. Everything that comes now is pure bonus! I believe they were made for this very moment!

*Apprentice of the Wind*

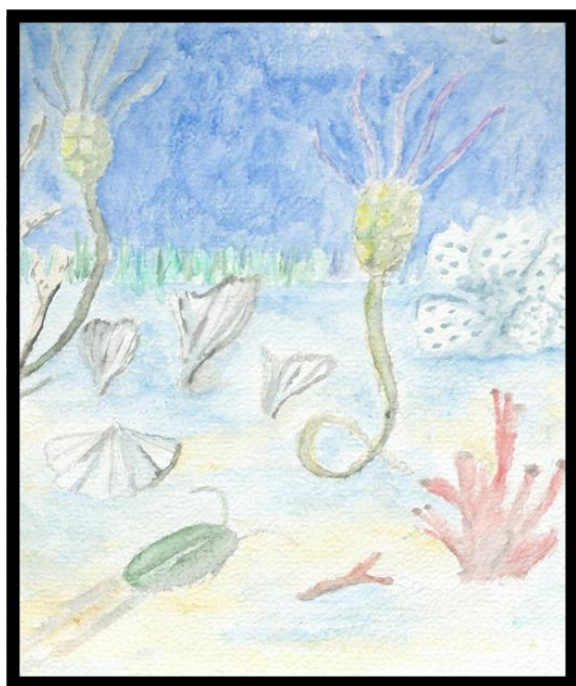
Together we set out to the sea  
we smooth the swell  
shape the waves  
like a potter the clay  
we welcome the travellers  
and stroke through their hair  
like a mother does to her child  
we sprinkle the salt  
season the air  
like a delicate soup  
we scatter the light  
and like a painter  
we bring colour to life





# ORDOVICIAN

*The Ordovician was a time of great life. The seas were full of new creatures, and sea levels were exceptionally high. There was an incredible explosion of diversity - the so-called "Great Ordovician Biodiversity Event" (GOBE). New life forms appeared everywhere, spreading across the waters and the ocean floor. The climate was warm, almost like a greenhouse, but towards the end of the Ordovician, it suddenly began to cool. A pronounced ice age started which caused a great mass extinction for which it is believed that 85% of marine life vanished.*





**I**t's almost unbelievable how alive everything is around me! Every day, I encounter a new marvel, a new wonder – life seems to be bursting forth everywhere! Everywhere I look, creatures are darting through the water, crawling along the ocean floor, or swimming in the currents, as if they were dancers in the wind. How marvellous is this diversity that unfolds around me!

Today was a day full of excitement. We were awakened by a loud, raucous sound. A huge, round creature stood in our protective coral reef. It was making a noise so thunderous that it felt impossible to sleep. We decided to name it "Gorgosch," because that's what its song sounded like. Its body was covered in iridescent shells, and it relentlessly devoured everything that came near – as though it could never get enough.

As it frolicked nearby, it initially felt a bit frightening. But soon we realized that Gorgosch wasn't a threat to us. Its hunger for food was so great that it accompanied us in our search for nourishment through the vast sea. It was so quick and unstoppable that it devoured rocks and algae in a way that we could only dream of. A true glutton, seemingly filled with the power of the oceans.

But not all companions of the sea are so... greedy. We encountered a small, nimble creature, darting through the currents at an incredible speed – we called it “Zirra.” It had tiny, shimmering wings that twirled it through the water with astonishing grace. But it was incredibly picky about its food. Quite the opposite of Gorgosch, it showed no interest in the massive algae or tiny life forms that we enjoyed. Instead, it was constantly circling, always hunting for something new and different, something we could never quite grasp.

Later, as the current carried us to another part of the sea, we encountered an especially fascinating being: “Kyra.” It was a glowing, bioluminescent creature, shimmering in the deep, dark waters, making mysterious sounds. At first, it was shy, keeping its distance from us. But eventually, as the desire for food brought us together, Kyra plunged into the depths and quickly devoured everything in its path. It had no hesitation, immediately overtaking us in its swift, gluttonous manoeuvres. What an impressive, though almost rude, creature!

But then came Fredi. A small, peaceful inhabitant of the shallow coastal areas. Quite different from the others. It came toward us so calmly and curiously, as if simply looking for company. We had never seen such an unafraid being. It sniffed at us, showing no fear at all. We tried to teach it a little bit

about the great secret of survival – it needed to know how to protect itself from the harsh currents and the many dangerous creatures lurking around us.

Eventually, we took Fredi through a course of rocks and algae to show it how to avoid danger. By the end of the day, it was much more agile than we had expected, but still – we knew that in this wild, untamed sea, it wouldn't survive alone. So, we gently picked him up and carried him to a safe spot, far from our camp, where it would be protected from the dangers of the deep. Goodbye, dear friend.

*Through rock and stone*

I crawl through rock, I crawl through stone  
The reef, the ocean - they're my home  
you may seek me - all alone  
you lose my tracks in sand and foam

Your hunt will soon be quite a waste  
Thought you had me, seen my trace?  
I slip away in perfect haste  
and glide on by with greatest grace

You try to trap me, corner me  
I'm like the current: quick and free  
as I slip through so easily  
and you - you're left in endless plea



## SILURIAN

*After a mighty ice age at the end of the Ordovician, the temperatures rose again and the climate shifted into a warm, greenhouse-like state. The earth was shaped by a dynamic nature with pronounced fluctuations in sea levels. New semi-terrestrial habitats allowed simple spore plants and arthropods to slowly conquer the land, pathing a new way for evolution to take its turn.*





The lagoon had an indescribable allure for us. We swarmed the reefs and sandbanks that separated the lagoon from the open sea. Fearfully, we huddled together, for none of us wanted to be swept away by the turbulent waves and crushed on the sharp reefs.

The waves crashed with a loud roar, and the stirred waters spat the sandbanks back at us. I was one of the first to dare approach the danger and was quickly caught, as if by a hungry predator. Over and over, I was pushed underwater for several seconds and spun through the thick suspension. But I remained a compact ball and once the fierce energy ceased a little, I fought with all I had to slowly make my way forward. Just as I was about to reach the lagoon, a particularly large wave grabbed me and spun me around so violently that I lost all sense of up and down.

But as I regained my orientation, I found myself gently floating in the shallow lagoon. At the water's edge, I gazed in awe at the massive sands that were carried by the wind far inland. I liked the little ripples the wind left in the sand—it almost felt as if the land had a shiver. Layered and fossilized sedimentary layers testified to millions of moments like this, millions of years ago. The layers were playfully pierced by sills and dykes, which, together with the conical mountain in the background,

spoke of past volcanic activity. To the west, the mountain gradually rolled out, transforming into a massive cliff that shimmered pink in the evening sun.

The clouds hurried across the barren land, and I dreamed of following them, traveling with them through this endless, unexplored land, discovering it. But sadly, I had to admit that these vast spaces would probably never hear my call, and would remain barren, empty deserts for all eternity.

Beside me, I saw a crowd of other dreamers, their eyes moist, imagining to wander across the land like a dune. A flicker of pity for these fools rose within me, and I forgot that I had just counted myself among them.

End of dreaming now! I wanted to return to my homeland. But the waves on the sandbank had grown even larger, and I could no longer leave the lagoon. Since then, I have been trapped here, not knowing what's next to come...

*Swept Away*

I stroll on by the ancient shore  
where new land meets the ocean's roar  
from messy skies the beams of light  
gently touch my face so bright

But winds of change are in the air

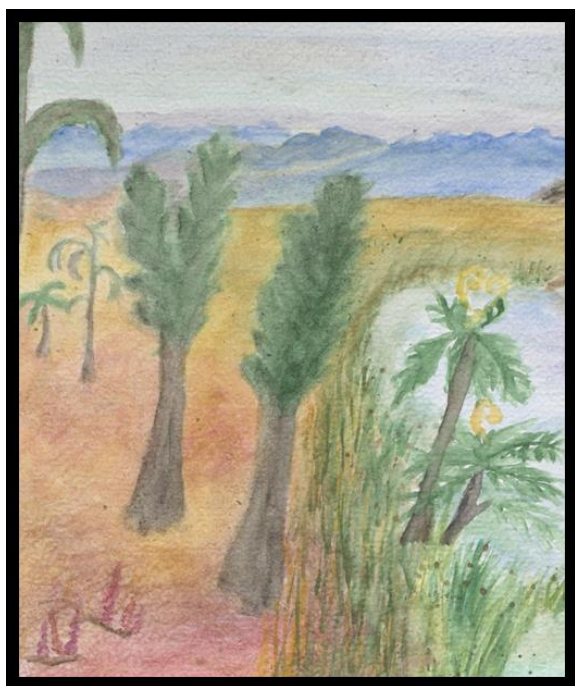
For wild clouds in the dusky sky  
race quickly through my wandering eye  
an upward glance from where I lay  
confirms  
soon I'll be swept away





## DEVONIAN

*The Devonian was a time of great change on Earth. During this period, the first forests emerged, and plants spread out across the landscape. New creatures evolved, including the first insects, jawed fish, and even early amphibians that adapted to life on land. It was an era of growth, but also of transformation, ending with a mass extinction event and the beginning of glaciation at the South Pole.*





I can no longer understand how I ended up in this situation. Wasn't it finally stable and pleasant, just as things were? How I delighted in every new plant that sprouted and how grateful I was for the dappled shadows of the feathered leaves that brought me the most restful sleep.

But what did it matter? I was just too young to dedicate my life to the senile contemplation of plants, to lounging in the shade. Adventure called to me. And I followed it to the uncharted worlds of this world.

So, I sought out a band of like-minded souls, and together we planned a daring expedition to the unexplored south. We built a clever contraption to carry the necessary supplies. None of us could have imagined the miserable situations we would soon find ourselves in.

The morning started harmoniously: The early sunlight spun playfully in circles across the sandy expanse where the first forests of giant ferns and horsetails grew. Here, in this strange world, the land was young and full of mysteries. The air was fresh, and the sound of small insects buzzing through the dense ferns echoed in our ears.

It was a world in transition. Everywhere, something seemed to be coming into existence: Oddly shaped fish glided through the clear rivers that

once carved their way through barren landscapes, while the ground beneath our feet seemed to shift constantly. Everything seemed to be pushing forward, growing, conquering – just like us. The night had been bitterly cold again, but we were in good spirits, motivated to set off. Everything rolled along peacefully.

Then: BANG.

With a deafening crash, part of our transport contraption broke, and the supplies fell to the ground. The structure tipped over, and we could only free ourselves from this awkward position with great effort.

It took patience and even more luck, but we managed to repair the spot once more. Admittedly, the repair was clumsy, the structure flawed. In hindsight, it was astonishing how long this makeshift solution managed to hold. It happened just before the gorge, at the start of the narrow crater edge that meandered southward.

Again: BANG.

This time, the damage was irreparable. Our goal lay still a long way along the ridge that stretched over the staggering abyss. We had no choice – we had to make it there!

We had already faced many challenges, could imagine many more. But moving this fragile contraption over the long distance up and down the ridge was more exhausting than anything we had experienced or imagined.

Each step was an unimaginable exertion. The ground trembled beneath our feet, as if it had not yet learned to be stable. The turbulence around was testing us, trying to drive us mad. Violent winds lashed at us horizontally, churning up the ground around us. Wildly, the world pounded against us.

every step was torture

we just wanted to arrive

to find safety somewhere

To no longer be exposed to this sheer exertion. Each inch was hard-earned; progress was excruciatingly slow.

we toiled

we laboured

and in the end

we didn't even make it

Just before our goal, the contraption collapsed, plummeting into the abyss and taking many of us who couldn't free ourselves in time.

All of us who remained had no choice but to build a makeshift camp. Despite panic, fear, and grief, we quickly fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

In the stillness of the night, as the cold air seeped into our bones, I reflected on our failure. It was not just the contraption that had failed. It was the way we had placed our trust in it – a reminder of how easily one can be deceived by possession and the illusion of security. Possession makes one dependent! We do not own these things; they own us, trapping us in their illusion of control and invulnerability.

The next morning, there was no trace of the turmoil from the night before. Innocently, the cold sunbeams danced on our noses. The world was quiet, almost peaceful. We and our shattered camp were the only witnesses to the tragedy of the previous night.



*I can 't*

I

I

can

hardly

breathe

can't think

can't speak

my body is flat

but the way is too steep

so I can't hold on

I must focus so hard

or I'll lose my way

I fall

I die

I

I can

't speak

can't think

only move

move and

breathe

but

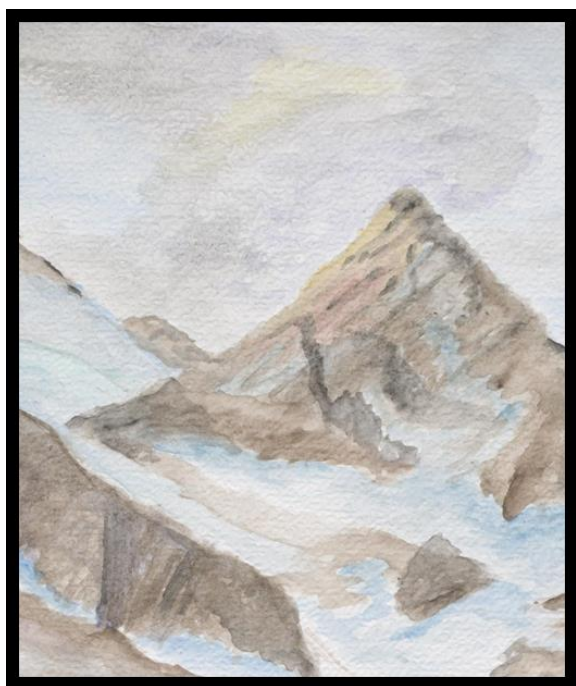
I

I



CARBONIFEROUS

*After a great mass extinction at the end of the Devonian, many new plant and animal species emerged. Dense forests developed in coal swamps, providing habitats for a wide variety of insects, including the first creatures with wings. Amphibians began to populate the land, and the first ancestors of reptiles and mammals appeared. Through the collision of the continents Gondwana and Laurussia, the supercontinent Pangaea was formed, accompanied by the rise of the Variscan mountains. At the end of the Carboniferous, a major ice age marked the transition to the Permian.*





Today, I truly wrestled with the world. Long before sunrise, I was out, eager to immerse myself in nature's raw embrace. Curious insects buzzed questioningly around me in the misty morning forest, as if to ask what someone like me could possibly want at such an unearthly hour.

### Outwards ... Upwards!

The scree welcomed me, silent and majestic. These stones, once cast down from the flanks of the surrounding high mountains, now lay scattered, slowly crumbling and dissolving into the vast plains of the valley.

It wasn't until I was deep within the valley, at the base of jagged mountain pyramids, that the sun managed to lift itself over the towering heights of the mountain walls. It invited me to gather strength for the coming duel with the elements.

Buoyed by its warmth, I ventured further into the valley. The sceptical buzzing of the flying insects, surely dismissing my intentions as utterly foolish, faded behind the last bend. Here, I was alone with a few hardy plants, forcing their way with great effort through cracks in the scree.

But the sight before me played into the sceptics' hands: An incredibly steep slope, blanketed in snow, loomed over a deep abyss. No path was

visible, and for miles, I hadn't seen a single track in the snow.

Far too much snow covered this precarious passage. I knew I had little chance, yet driven by youthful curiosity, I wanted to take a closer look. With tense focus, I stepped toward the steep section.

I adapted to my surroundings, developing a method to navigate the steep, slippery inclines with some degree of confidence. My curiosity bubbled within me, but I moved with excruciating caution, inch by inch. What a strange, thrilling sensation it was to traverse the steepest part, concentrated entirely on the task, suspended above the yawning void! Where jagged rocks jutted out, I reached for support, feeling surprisingly secure. The abyss edged closer, menacingly intimate. But he didn't claim me, the intruder! In a trance-like state, I danced through this tightrope act, finding myself, to my own amazement, beyond the steep section, in a no-man's-land that seemed crafted exclusively for adventurous souls like me.

The sound of avalanches cracked in the distance as I gazed in awe at the massive walls, from which snow and rocks cascaded incessantly into the cirque above me. Despite the obvious danger, my thirst for discovery drove me forward. Laboriously,



it pulled me along: Every few steps, the ground gave way beneath me, and I sank—sometimes partially, sometimes entirely—into the unpredictable snow. I slid jubilantly down steep slopes, climbed over fallen trees, and forced my way through snowy thickets.

Unfamiliar figures darted repeatedly through my view. Moving with an absurd ease in this inhospitable world, they seemed utterly out of place and yet perfectly at home.

Eventually, I realized I had reached a dead end. Standing on a ridge that abruptly ended, I saw that the entrance to the true valley—my intended path—lay much higher up. But I wasn't ready to give up so easily! I tried countless variations, desperate manoeuvres, searching for a way down. I floundered wildly through the deep snow, refusing to surrender. Never!

But in the end, I had to admit defeat and retrace my steps. The climb back up—a path I had so effortlessly descended mere moments ago—felt gruelling and mentally exhausting.

After hours of effort, I found myself back at the highest point. On a whim, I decided to scramble up the nearby summit. Here, on its thawed grassy top, I am basking in the sun, dozing since what felt like an eternity.

I think I have every reason to be content: Today, I had truly wrestled with the world. I had broken through snow, encountered bizarre mountain inhabitants, discovered new paths, witnessed massive avalanches crashing down towering slopes, taken minor injuries in stride, and faced this hostile landscape alone. I had walked the path of trust. Perhaps it was reckless, but those 12 hours were pure, unadulterated adventure!

*Wild in and out*

Like a mountain I rise  
like a river I flow  
I climb over myself  
and I drink from my soul

Like a forest I foul  
but never the whole  
just making space  
for new things to grow

Like a cloud I cry  
just to lose weight  
My thoughts floating by  
like a body in space

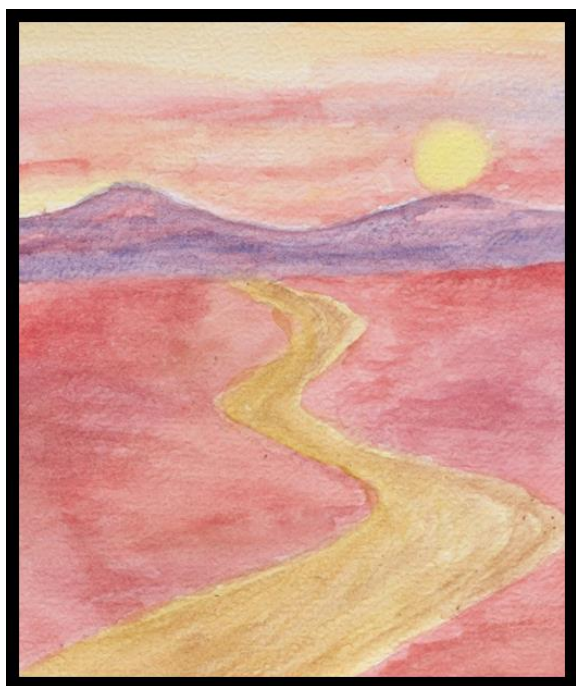
With robin I sing  
and we dance to our song  
my heart's open wide  
for what's next to come

Now I've seen a face  
in the crystal-clear pond  
so wild in and out  
you're where I belong



PERMIAN

*During the Permian, red, sandy to pebbly sediments were deposited as the ice at the South Pole slowly receded. The world became increasingly arid, vast salt deserts formed as the intense heat evaporated water. All continents were united into a single supercontinent called Pangaea. Yet, the Permian ended with one of the greatest mass extinction events in Earth's history. This was primarily triggered by massive volcanic activity that released enormous amounts of greenhouse gases. These events led to global warming, oxygen depletion in the oceans, and the collapse of many ecosystems.*







I am flowing like a river through life. The landscape around me changes relentlessly, rebuilding itself anew with every step I take. At times, I found myself surrounded by lush green meadows, at others, by dense, misty forests. But for quite some time now, I have been flowing through barren, desolate stretches of land. Everything is unbearably dry; the ground is nothing but dusty emptiness.

I had just grown accustomed to the vibrant variety—the green life, the brimming veins of water—yet now it seems every plant was nothing more than an illusion. The wind no longer dances with feathered leaves; instead, it carries only crumbling dust across these parched deserts.

This dryness is draining me of water! Thinner and thinner I trickle through the landscape, desperately trying to hold on to what little substance remains. But the greedy, unrelenting sun steals it from me without mercy. Even the forests turned against me in this land. The dry grounds and mighty trees have nothing to share with me, but darkness and a sense of “you’re not welcome here”.

I have only one thought left

the sea                    I miss the sea

I miss to see the sea

I miss to see it ceaselessly

Thoughts of the sea are the only thing driving me forward now. How I wish I were truly a river, certain that my journey would eventually lead to the saving embrace of the ocean. But in truth, I am merely a speck of dust in the infinite expanse of the cosmos, a fragment crawling thirstily, wearily, and alone through these sun-scorched wastelands.

How I made it in the end? I cannot say. Perhaps it was the wind that carried me forward, or the unyielding hope that even the driest landscapes must eventually give way. But the feeling of reuniting with the ocean—our shared origin—granted me a sense of solace that I will carry with me for all time.

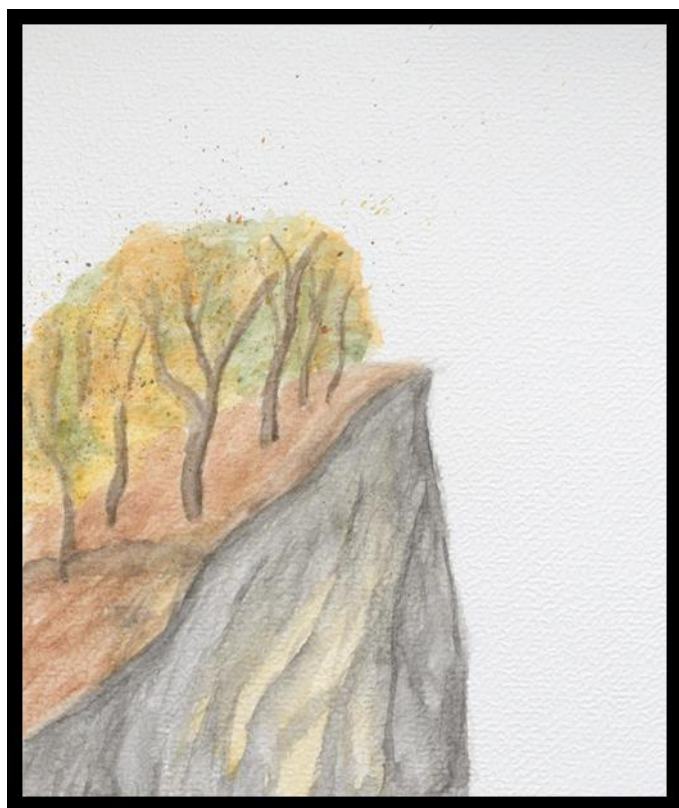
*The gust*

I settle on the forest floor  
my gaze rises struck with awe  
above me, giant, towering trees  
so many trees  
here it must be, to finally sprout  
bony branches sway in the wind  
tempting me up  
I give it a try  
but they grin mockingly  
and quickly close their canopy  
they take all the light  
refuse to share  
and laugh at me  
then they quickly suck all water  
into their mighty trunks  
I lie there withering  
slowly drying out  
but luckily  
I become lighter  
soon, a gust picks me up  
and carries me away



## TRIASSIC

*About 250 million years ago, the largest mass extinction in Earth's history occurred. Many species of plants and animals disappeared forever. However, life recovered from this catastrophic incident during the Triassic period and the relative importance of land animals grew. Not only Reptiles increased in number and diversity but also the first dinosaurs and mammals occurred. In the seas of the western Tethys, small plankton organisms with calcium shells sedimented to build thick layers of rock that we now know as the Alpine Triassic. These layers make up much of the limestone in the Alps. By the end of the Triassic, sea levels rose, and Central Europe was once again submerged. The climate was hot and dry.*







The others went ahead, and I followed them through the overgrown thicket. A faint trail could barely be imagined, but somewhere here had to be the place we were looking for! Suddenly, we stood before a small precipice. A few meters below, a narrow path wound its way. I was certain: This wasn't the right way!

But those eager ones! One had already swung down by a branch and landed unsteadily on the lower path. More followed promptly, albeit hesitantly. From below, they grinned up at us, assuring they would catch anyone who tried. And they did - but the weight! A few staggering steps too far, and the abyss laughed mockingly, mercilessly pulling them down.

It all felt surreal: Even as I clung to the branch, I watched helplessly as my friends disappeared, one after another, from view. The rustling of bushes through which they fell thundered in my ears. But the voices of my friends would never sound again.

At first, I couldn't comprehend what had just happened. Everything was silent. Only a few insects buzzed cheerfully, utterly indifferent to the tragedy that had unfolded.

This     !     be     !     THIS     !     this     !  
!     can't     !     true     !     CAN'T     !     can't  
This     !     be     !     be     !     BE     !  
!     CAN'T     !     true     !     true     !     TRUE

How could my best friends die so suddenly, so unexpectedly, right before my eyes? Slowly, I began to grasp that this was the worst moment of my entire life.

Though the Earth may never have been as hot or dry as it feels to me now, a coldness began to spread within me. Everything that followed only fed this frost, like a positive feedback loop. The world seems to never stop teaching me its cruelty. These experiences crash down on me like boulders tumbling from a mountain:

unpredictable

devastating

deafening

Everything happens so incredibly fast, and now I don't even know who I am, where I am, or why I am. What's the point of it all? Why all the struggle, when this angry world will just take away everything I hold dear, again and again?

I feel unwelcome here. Like thick, black sludge, despair rises within me, filling my throat until it

threatens to burst. I sense there will be no escape for some time. From now on, every day will be a battle between the fire inside me and this suffocating sludge. My only task is to keep it hot and malleable, to stop it from solidifying - until the day I can spit it back at this cruel world.

I feel lonelier than ever. I feel more lost than ever. I feel smaller than ever.

Lying here, beneath a roof of sparkling stars, however, I get a sense that those above don't truly take my troubles seriously.

*Mocked*

Once, life tasted bitter to me  
I cared little for the world at all  
Much more, I let myself fall  
and began to set my spirit free

Removed all things that held me  
dear  
a sad farewell with little tear  
Everything I loved and pleased  
My bitter self, it slowly ceased

I was ready for myself to stifle  
and surrender to the eternal cycle

As a blank sheet, I ventured out  
To leave the world, escape my  
wars  
And I slept beneath the stars  
Oh, how did they laugh aloud

JURASSIC

*In the Jurassic, the land was dominated by reptiles, especially dinosaurs, and over time, birds began to evolve. Among plants, conifers were widespread, but the first flowering plants also began to appear. In the sea, plankton organisms flourished, and reef ecosystems evolved significantly. Around this time, the supercontinent Pangaea began to break apart, giving rise to new oceans.*







Water is the ultimate! Life without water is unimaginable to me! How grateful I am to come from the sea! Yet, what I have always overlooked is that rivers and lakes are also water... And what water they are! Especially the experience of drinking fresh spring water is as pure and original as the water itself! Sometimes I miss the sea, but only until I jump into the icy mountain stream and feel pure vitality on my skin.

For here, more than ever, I feel how all water is always in motion - never fully contained, always new. It's as if this water reminds me of everything - the fleeting nature of each moment, the constant change of life, and the strength that can arise from it.

Right now, I lie in a colourful mountain meadow between blooming trees, drying in the gentle afternoon sun. Along with the water on me, the ethereal oils of the wild herbs around me evaporate, thickening the air with a sweet perfume of the good life. How sweet the simplicity of life can smell; how sweet it can taste!

I know! This too is fleeting, it will pass. The meadow, the flowers - we will all soon fade! Yet, in the same moment, something new will sprout. Could this not be the comfort in all of this? That no end remains without a beginning?

When I get hungry, I need only take a few steps and I am faced with a rich selection of different fruits.

crisp

oval

fibrous

soft

round

thick

thin

fleshy

juicy

grainy

I don't even know enough adjectives to describe this overwhelming variety. Then all the tastes - here my storytelling ends!

Now, everything may seem abundant, but I know it will not always be this way. Abundance and scarcity belong together - two banks of the same river of life.

There is so much to discover here! Today, for example, I found a new flower whose matte yellow, I think, is my new favourite colour! I gave it a name and connected it to a short story, so I won't forget it.

This beautiful flower will be gone in a few weeks, but as long as I remember its name, it will continue to live in me. This is the only small form of eternity I can offer to it.

Sometimes, I wish I had wings, like the creatures circling above me! I could soar from my mountain meadow into the air, the giant trees around me

would be no more than small green pins, I would circle in the updrafts, higher and higher, until I finally folded my wings to dive into the sea in a wild plunge.

Ah, how strong I feel from all the new impressions of late! It's as if I have taken a sip from the elixir of life and now have a much deeper insight into becoming, passing, and the shared eternity of life as a whole.

*The elixir of life*

Thick, wet air  
pervades the humid wood,  
quietly carries a symphony  
that echoes loud and good

I barely heard the melody  
its beauty passing by  
when suddenly, a floral scent  
bewitched me, sweet and sly

It drew me in, I stumbled on  
completely overwhelmed  
I lost my grip and tumbled down  
into a blossom's realm

Free falling, weightless still  
without any fear or ache  
until I landed soft and bare  
in a nectar-sweetened lake

I swam a stroke, I took a sip,  
instantly felt a grin

It tasted of perfection's bloom  
of unity within  
Its power was more tumbling  
than the strongest gin

So once, when young, I plunged into  
the elixir of life  
I drank and drank to blissful heights  
without a fear of strife

Now I am filled, I feel so strong  
this strength will set me free  
and now I hear, much deeper still,  
life's gentle harmony



# CRETACEOUS

The world changed drastically during the Cretaceous period. The vast landmass of Pangaea continued to break apart, and new continents began to form. In the oceans, life flourished: Tiny organisms like plankton thrived, forming the foundation for many other creatures. On land, dinosaurs still reigned supreme, while the first modern birds began to develop. The plant world also took a huge step forward: Flowering plants spread, gradually shaping the landscape - a glimpse of the world as we know it today. The climate was warm and tropical, with no significant ice at the poles. But by the end of the Cretaceous, a dramatic turning point occurred: A massive extinction event for which meteorite impacts and massive volcanic eruptions were likely responsible.







There was movement in the ocean. Where just yesterday, the storm waves had clashed in a loud chaos, the dispute had been settled overnight, and now clear lines gently strolled toward the shore of the wide bay, enclosed by lush green mountains. It was as if the waves were moving hand-in-hand toward me, to the welcoming shore, I thought.

But just before they would reach it, one of them stumbled, and the whole group tumbled, one after another, in a loud crash. All that remained of their beauty was the foul-smelling foam on the coast. Like these children of the wind, I too will one day fall, and be washed up, stinking and dishevelled, onto some shore— a writhing relic of the movement that once carried me.

Strangely, I almost enjoyed these gloomy thoughts. They seemed to fit well with the melancholic sunshine that shimmered through the spicy salt mist.

Above me, I heard a raucous commotion, joyful voices echoing through the fog. Slightly irritated, my gaze wandered up to the shamelessly happy creatures in the sky. They circled vigilantly above the waves, watching intently the events below them. When a particularly large wave began to break, a daredevil would plunge down in a steep

dive, leveling off just at the last moment, skimming close to the water's surface, always in pursuit of the roaring white foam. There must be some kind of air suction, I thought, pulling them like magnets to glide directly over the water's surface.

Just for the perspective alone, such a flight must be worth it! How I would love to tap into the images in their eyes! It must be truly special to see such images of the natural spectacle of organically rising water mountains in your own mind... But I, with my hefty legs, can at least be glad that I am not rooted to the earth like the trees, but can move freely on land. Lucky enough, I am tall enough to smell almost any flower I come across on my way - perhaps the delicate magnolia or the fragrant blossoms of a laurel tree - which I'm sure those up there are envious of! Besides, I have wonderful eyes through which I can watch this spectacle from afar.

Some of them were even completely covered by the breaking wave. Terrified, I stood there, believing they had been swallowed by the ocean forever. But then, just as I had already mentally said goodbye to them, they were spat out by the sea in the last, no, the long-overdue moment. In a screeching display of vitality, they joined the circling group once more, eagerly waiting for the next daring volunteer.

Gradually, the fog of my morning melancholy began to lift. I thought to myself: I'm still breathing. I probably still have some time before I too become a little stinky crown of foam on the shore.

And when that time comes, perhaps I will open the stage for other quirky birds, who will make life a little more amusing.

*Children of the wind*

Children of the wind  
born of the sea  
come close to me  
I am yearning for thee

You are the fairest  
the farthest afloat  
My heart it tumbles  
my breath I can't hold

But as I marvel  
at your beauty with awe  
soon we shall break  
as foam on the shore

TERTIARY

*The Tertiary is formally divided into the Paleogene and the Neogene. After the mass extinction at the Cretaceous/ Paleogene boundary, a vast development of today's dominant life forms began. Flowering plants became increasingly diverse, birds occupied many ecological niches, and mammals crept out of their dark caves to replace the dinosaurs as the Earth's dominant life form. The climate began to cool and wide Steppe areas developed, what promoted the development of large mammals.*







I was incredibly tired. At first, I dreamily watched the treetops dancing in the wind, but some time before sunset, I had already fallen asleep. I felt safe and secure – just here in the open. I would never have allowed myself such a thing before; I was always on guard... A rustle in the leaves, a snapping twig, and my eyes would widen, my heart race. Every night was a fight for survival, every shadow a potential enemy.

But now, I slept carelessly out in the open – an idea that would have been unthinkable back then – and I felt safer than in any cave before.

When I woke, it was still pitch-black night. My mind, however, was wide awake and full of energy. It made little difference whether I opened or closed my eyes: It was so dark that I felt as if I had been cast into the darkest part of the universe.

Trusting my sense of touch, I gathered my belongings in the darkness and began to weave my way through the trees. Had I not been so cautious, I would have sustained countless injuries, for it was only when I stood directly before them that I saw the pitch-black giants looming in front of me.

It was completely silent. Not a single leaf stirred. There was no rustling anywhere.

no wind  
no movement  
all alone  
oh  
no breath  
no one  
nowhere  
in the whole world  
what a wonderful thought

This stillness proved that my newfound sense of safety wasn't just a fever dream. The world was quiet and peaceful, and I felt my body drinking in this calm like dry land soaking up the first rain.

At the same time, a new feeling began to grow within me. The old instincts that had once kept me alive began to transform. They became something else - a curiosity, a longing for more. Darkness was no longer an enemy but a realm full of possibilities. Now I could wander through the night simply because I wanted to - not because I had to. And just as easily, I could calmly and leisurely search for food during the day and even take a nap in the sun's rays.

I can try everything in this world, experiment with myself, with all the exciting experiences this vast world full of opportunities has to offer.

I am ready to conquer the world.

*Avocet*

I wade  
I probe  
through the mud  
from left to right  
from right to left  
I test my beak  
and seek to see  
what in this life  
feels best for me



# QUATERNARY

*The climate cools significantly. There are drastic ice ages at both poles. Roughly every 100,000 years, intense glaciations alternate with climate conditions similar to today. The world as we know it begins to take shape, including humanity.*







Within me, the feeling grows stronger that I know the path I want to take in life: A path that has no end but leads toward awareness, reason, and wisdom. It is a beautiful path, demanding yet entirely achievable.

From this path, small trails branch off to the right and left. There may be exciting little adventures along the way. Challenging climbs that can make you stronger. Some of these paths appear to be shortcuts, yet they always lead back to this common path, which we all walk together and which has no end. The "shortcuts" can bring beautiful, sensual experiences, intoxicating views, but it can also lead to exposed, slippery spots, trigger intense fear, and, in the worst case, end in a fall.

I almost had such an experience yesterday and became clearer in my mind that I want to walk the path entirely on my own strength, avoiding these "shortcuts." For only if we climb the mountain with our own power, will we grow stronger through each experience and continue the long journey on our own legs.

After yesterday's adventure, I am now even happier to be back at our camp. In fact, the sun is finally shining again, and it even warms a little if you stay in the shelter from the wind.

Ah, this is the life – La Dolce Lagerleben!

The fire is burning all day, and with it, we cook and wash our clothes. Otherwise, we paint, we carve, we chat... happy days!

Maybe I'll even go play in the sea again.

Despite the cold.

*Fire-Tea*

I was so cold  
I couldn't cope  
I felt so stiff, I felt so old

My limbs were strange  
I couldn't stand  
My toes in pain, the cold was grand

But then, I made some Fire-Tea  
and already with the first slurp  
it gave me a new drive to surf



# ANTHROPOCENE

*The influence of humankind on Earth has reached an overwhelming scale. Industrialization, urbanization, and the exponentially increasing use of fossil fuels led to profound changes in the atmosphere, oceans, all ecosystems. Since the mid-20th century, human activities have overlain natural processes: Global temperatures are rising rapidly, biodiversity is disappearing at an unprecedented rate, and humans have become a dominant geological force.*







**I**t was unbelievable how much waste had accumulated in just a few days! Without a hint of remorse, eggs from cage farming, meat, and cheese from intense livestock farming were bought in vast quantities. How many animals had to suffer and die for this unnecessary? And in the end: Tons of waste, shamelessly discarded animal products—all that suffering, only to end up wrapped in plastic and trashed away?!

What seemed particularly cynical was the attitude towards us not eating meat. While we cooked almost exclusively for everyone, the others helped themselves generously and then proudly proclaimed that they were "saving the world" because they didn't eat meat during one meal (often, however, subtly garnished with cooked ham).

Otherwise  
morning, noon, night  
death, suffering, consumption

How can such a behaviour be considered "normal"?

The peak of absurdity during the excursion was a discussion with our professor about the problems of our future. The trigger was the idea of offsetting the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of our flight through

compensation payments. He indignantly responded, under no circumstances should we do that: The albedo effect made measures like reforestation difficult to model in climate calculations, which is why supporting such measures was "unscientific".

I argued that reforestation is not only essential for the climate but also for nature conservation. Yet, he dismissed this with an unbelievable claim: "Conservation biology prevents evolution." He claimed that scientifically, it couldn't be proven whether biodiversity was even important to humans. He concluded with a grim thesis that lifestyle changes wouldn't make a difference anyway—the "point of no return" had been crossed. Only new technologies could "save us" now.

I could vomit when I think about how the eyes of some of my fellow students lit up during this lecture – you could practically feel their relief: "Exactly! We need better technologies – but we don't need to change ourselves at all – happy days! Everything stays the same. Bacon is best. And our professor is handling the rest with Monsanto and the car industry..."

This discussion reminded me of the dystopian movie *Wall-E*: Obese people drifting through space, consumed by consumption. Our professor

is actually dreaming of a similar scenario: A new planet for humanity! Because Earth is supposedly a "dying planet." For this, he has crafted a ridiculous geological argument: The subduction of tectonic plates results in less CO<sub>2</sub> being returned to the Earth's mantle, and over millions of years, less CO<sub>2</sub> is vented, making the climate eventually hostile to life.

In truth, he just doesn't want to limit human consumption, but rather wants to intensify it. How can people not give everything

### EVERYTHING

to keep this wonderful planet habitable? Instead, they create arguments to avoid confronting their excessive behaviour.

I don't understand that! I've only had good experiences with simplicity, and I just can't understand this vehement opposition against it!

Since that excursion, I know for sure that I want to be more active in environmental protection! I want to even more stand up for this planet and find likeminded people to take stewardship in keeping us and the planet alive.

Especially absurd was the hypocrisy of our professor: In the morning, he gave us a lecture

about our lack of reason when it comes to climate protection, and in the evening, he was celebrating his oversized tuna steak. His argument that his research on CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration through research on enhanced silicate weathering "more than offsets" his own carbon footprint underscores the core problem: Even if his balance "looks good" on paper, the unbearable consequences of his consumption—all that suffering and lost biodiversity—are irretrievable.

I felt especially alone when, during an evening conversation, our professor put forward the thesis that it was better "to live rich in a monarchy than poor in a democracy." I didn't need a second to think: I completely reject this thesis because an autocracy is ethically indefensible under ANY circumstances! I was even more shocked when, one by one, more and more discussion participants agreed with his outrageous thesis.

Please.

Let's not lose our temper now.

Please.

Let's stay humble and grateful.

Please.

Let's hold together and face these  
present-day challenges with  
connection and care.

I believe it now requires mindfulness, composure, and courage to master today's seemingly untameable challenges and to stride in unity towards a better future with renewed energy and greater respect for ourselves and all life on this planet.

### *Tomorrow*

I cautiously open my eyes.

Golden water sparkles in the morning sun.

Birds fly, screeching with joy, through the mild air  
of the emerging day.

Shadows of scattered clouds move across the  
blue expanse of the endless sea.

A gentle breeze tickles the surface of the water.

Laughing, it embraces the touch.

Already, the waves want to move to the rhythm of  
the wind.

They brightly shine the light of the sun into every  
corner of the world.

More clouds from the West break the light into  
scattered rays

and glowing waves dance like wild people  
into the darkening sky.

They tumble, they wrestle, they rage, they scream  
and throw their massive bodies in ecstasy to each  
other.

A bold blow from behind and with a rising roar  
the crown breaks into foamy fragments.



Disturbance arises.

Salivating, broken waves lose themselves in the darkness of the night.

Space is made for the victims of the next painful blow.

Ugly grimaces with hateful eyes eagerly snap at the weaknesses of the others.

I find myself swimming in the towering waves of the raging storm.

The penetrating cold of hate and of hatred burns painfully on my sensitive skin.

With a brave glance, I fill my lungs and escape the frenzy into the depths of the sea.

Not far below, only a dull murmuring remains of the chaos.

Carefully, I sink deeper into my resting core.

I close my eyes and wait for tomorrow.



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