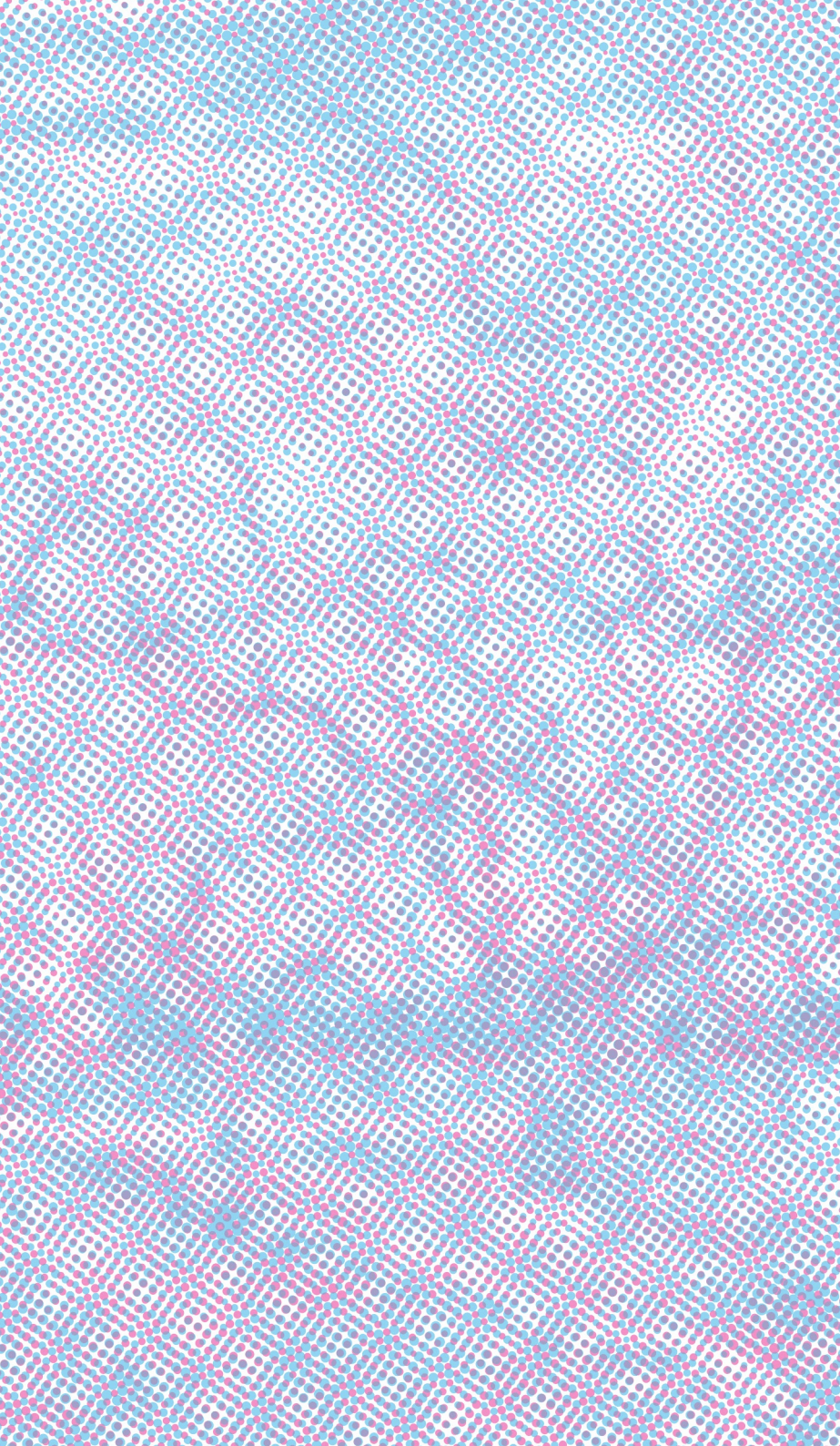


**Is this where the  
magic happens?**

Luke Winter



Because, to him who ponders well,  
My rhymes more than their rhyming tell  
Of things discovered in the deep,  
Where only bodies laid asleep.  
For the elemental creatures go  
About my table to and fro,  
That hurry from unmeasured mind  
To rant and rage in flood and wind;  
Yet he who treads in measured ways  
May surely barter gaze for gaze.  
Man ever journeys on with them  
After the red-rose-bordered hem.

*W.B. Yeats, excerpt from 'To Ireland in the Coming Times'*

*Is this where the magic happens?*

2020

Luke Winter

[www.prancepress.com](http://www.prancepress.com)

## ABOVE THE M8

Alright son. See up there. Past the traffic lights and over that bridge. There's twelve lanes of traffic. Cars and vans and lorries all pelting along with each other.

Glasgow's a grey smur today. All the concrete dripping and looking nearly black. There's no light in the sky, won't be either until the grey fades out and the orange and LED slide on.

See up there, twelve unholy, all natural lanes of the weaving, wheezing traffic all tearing the sodden road to strips of screaming drips between them. You'll drive that one day. And the first time that you do, the first time you're piloting a metal box at 70mph towards barriers and lines, it will feel improbable.

But later, perhaps by the next week, you've always been a fast learner, you will guide your vehicle into the prescribed lanes, note and judge the behaviour of others doing the same. You will breeze along at 70mph amid those 12 lanes of traffic. You'll have the radio on, playing your favourite song inside your metal box. You might sing. By then you will have learnt to trust. That is, agreed. Learnt that if you act in the agreed pattern, you will be safe. All it is, between that gnashing, splashing traffic, is an agreement. As

long as everyone sticks to the agreed movements, turns and lets others turn, keeps going in one direction, everyone remains safe. Of course people push the agreements, consciously or not. They lose control, and the agreements break down in broken bodies. But for the most part the agreements of the road work, and this horrendous din, this clashing, warring scene, seen from above, has become its own neat system of give and take, as the metal boxes whirl by each other in the correct lines at 50-110mph, and the water sprays between them.

All the cities work this way. Laid out across cities we find agreements in bars, schools, offices. Places that have rules that if we follow, we might traverse without incident or wonder. You might yet, I pray not, sit in any of these miracles of our civilization, without a shred of wonder. Ignore the elements that are all piped and bottled for our convenience. The skies kept out. The garments sewn abroad sagging here as cladding for your fellows. You might feel horror that all this has been imagined and constructed by your fellow humans. Dreams to which you have been invited to participate. Trusts extended. You may dance in the casino at 5am under electric lights whilst the rain comes down way beyond double-glazed glass, without making a sound that you could hear.

## SYNDROME

What is it about Glasgow that it makes you want to hurt yourself?

## THE APPROACH

The strangest way to approach the airport is on foot. The city ends. Or nearly ends. And the busiest port in the city blinds the night. Runway lights that never extinguish slant hedgerows in silhouettes in surrounding fields. Columns of traffic hurtle to fill the airport's vast parking with city centre speed. It is 5am. It is rush hour at the airport.

An angry horn sounds into the night from the roundabout. Past the neon hotels with familiar names and square shoulders. Into the departures funnel where the neat and clean people take off their shoes and coats and belts and place all luggage into the receptacles provided and pass through the beep or not machine and wait for the machine to return or capture their hand luggage. People take their returned receptacles to stainless steel stations and tug their shoes on. For twenty-five metres all adults walk in their socks across the buffed floor looking like kindergarteners. Fluorescent lights, bright as any leisure centre. It is 5:45am at Edinburgh

International, and the first flights to London Luton, Manchester, Birmingham, Munich, Heathrow and Frankfurt are aloft.

#### THE BAZAAR

After reclothing and reassembling luggage, travellers head to the departures lounge by passing through a septic-lit bazaar. The bazaar is formed in a U-shape. Its exit is very close to where its entrance funnel begins, but there is no shortcut. You, as everyone else, must traipse this forced detour past products. The bright rows of alcohol, cigarettes, concealers, sunglasses, as proud and familiar as a national anthem. The same perfumes, the same cosmetics that haunt the airport bazaar in all countries. Neat sales assistants cluck the gospel of success with professional smiles. The gauntlet of international commodities is haunted with aspirational photography.

This is our homage. A reminder of all we are journeying for in our aeroplanes today. A reminder of what we are journeying towards, and why we keep journeying.

Beyond the bazaar is a wide hall in which a central bank of screens itinerise the departing flights. Departure time, destination, gate number,

flight status. This is the departures lounge, lined by shops. Some of the shops repeat themselves as you walk further towards your gate. In Edinburgh airport departures lounge there are three units of WH Smith, an oyster and champagne bar, multinational coffee chains. Two bars. Clothes shops. Every chair and inch of space is possessed by some heap of clothes and luggage. Eating or sleeping. Purchasing or passive.

#### ALOFT

The plane climbs. The sun climbs. Above the clouds the horizon goes red in a way that it cannot ever be close to the ground. The bands of red are suppressed by a band of green and above that green is light blue, navy, eventually black.

As we climb, the sun climbs. The band of red grows wider, adds to orange. Above it yellow fades into green and the blue stretches skyward, outshining the day-bright stars. The night goes.

The flight attendant's intonation, keeps engaging such questions as:

“Still or sparkling?”

“Is that all for you?”

“Would you like me [*upper*]

to print the receipt for you? [lower]"

The passengers are engaged in buying small bottles of red wine or orange juice from the trolley.

A lady in her sixties plays a crossword on her iPad.

## EMOTION

*The faster you move the smaller that the world you inhabit becomes.*

*The slower you live, the larger the world you are in becomes.*

*(In the manner of sitting in a room).*

Roam sweet roam. Stirring breaths up. Unlimbering new rhythms, prancing with the unknown, accelerating familiarity. Deepening. Rejecting old habits, dancing the new ones. All stirred up aboard the road to know-where express. Toot toot.

Learning is as important in staying placed as in cutting about. Dancing on the pendulum and respecting the needs to follow the impulse to plunge when it comes. One way, and then the other. Going back the same place we've always gone. But perhaps more kindly. More patiently. Less expectant, and

more thankful. The journey to gentleness feels both tempestuous, and rewarding.

But emotion is movement. And there is emotion in every moment. And you choose how much movement to fill any moment with. Pace. Find your rhythm.

I'm producing too many stories at once because what I want is for you to feel, around the story, a saturation of other stories that I could tell and maybe will tell or who knows may already have told on some other occasion, a space full of stories that perhaps is simply my lifetime, where you can move in all directions, as in space, always finding stories that cannot be told until other stories are told first, and so, setting out from any moment or place, you encounter always the same density of material to be told. In fact, looking in perspective at everything I am leaving out of the main narration, I see something like a forest that extends in all directions and is so thick that it doesn't allow

light to pass: a material, in other words, much richer than what I have chosen to put in the foreground this time, so it is not impossible that the person who follows my story may feel himself a bit cheated, seeing that the stream is dispersed into so many trickles, and that of the essential events only the last echoes and reverberations arrive at him.

- *Italo Calvino, If on a Winter's Night a Traveller, trans. by William Weaver, p.88.*

## HALLOWEEN

Words come  
From belonging.

On the back of my hand two flies mate. End to end.

I have found a sacred space in Kings Park walled garden beneath the cherry trees.

Halloween. The northern roofs are lined with frost and the last of the leaves shine against the blue sky like panes of stained glass.

I shake hands with the cherry tree and the leaf comes off in my hand. Red and yellow.

## MERRY EVERYTHING

Merry day off

Merry going to work

Merry frosted evening

Merry hay fever

Merry travelling

Merry making your bed

Merry making food for your children

Merry Friday

Merry doing the work of understanding how your identity oppresses others

Merry capitalism

Merry life expectancy

Merry time to read a novel

Merry hello

Merry remembering the old neighbourhood

Merry silence between strangers

Merry shouting in the street and feeling the energy of life rush from every part of you

Merry today

Merry everything

Merry half moon

Merry bic lighter

Merry

## OURSAD PARADISE

Where everything is available and nothing is treasured. You have not learnt the items of each aisle, my child. Committed their arrangement to your memory. Seasonal aisles and daily essentials separated to opposite corners. You do not know the forty types of chocolate biscuit, and on which self your preferences sit. Yellow sticker. Special offer. Take, take.

“A person is a person because they recognize others as persons.”

- *Desmond Tutu*

## FLIGHT

She walks. Away. Jangling with my giddiness. I am fascinated. If she knows that she carries my hopes, she does so opaquely. Keep your hopes closer. Don't allow them to roost, so easily, on others.

## RUA ANGELINA VIDAL

Through the window of a well-lit shop, laughing people at dusk.

Now I try to live in the present but for years I lived in the ecstasy of mourning the electric moments that I'd let slip. I would revel in the tragedy, the shame, the stupidity of knowing - or was it expectation, pride, vanity - that I could have encountered the situation differently. Broached normality: included the moment in my charisma. Lifted it to include the others. Surfed the ecstatic with the joy that I had brought with me.

Perhaps it is a trap of having or feeling charisma. The inverse: the canyon of opportunities not spent. For in that death of sleep, what dreams come. Having felt the possible, to let that possibility fade, and allow it to die, its hopes unchallenged. Not having embraced its gauntlet. What shirking, shrinkage of shame and parabola of reflection. But what to gain? Opportunity is more than transactional.

Then the explanation. The complication of analysis: doubt, shame, fragility. And me, burning under that surveillance. My own shame sphere, panopticon of pride, paranoia.

I walked by the shop at dusk and saw in pleasant light, three people beginning to enjoy a glass of wine. I saw the open door, and I imagined stepping through it to introduce myself, to become part of their mirth, in that beautiful space. But I did not. I continued to walk. My mind filled with these spirals.

Now I walked nowhere. I walked in the past. I walked in imagined lands. The present was obliterated. Strangled by imagining some natural illusion.

Perhaps this is why so many comedians are depressed, commit suicide. They understand the supple possibility of the present, see where they failed to surmount it. Felt the lift beginning to rise, and did not surf its crescendo. And rather than revel in the time of their achievements, the understanding of the great feast of possibility that underpins all moments, they boil in the shame of the gulf. Damn themselves for having seen the possibility of an experience that they chose not to live. And all the while that our minds busy with this, the present slips by uncelebrated.

# SKETCH THE FLOW THAT EXISTS ALREADY INTACT IN YOUR MIND

## BOOKSHOP BIVAR

Eduada who runs Bivar Books in Lisbon tells me over a coffee she has bought for me, “do not fall in love with anyone who makes you the centre of their universe, who wants to live through you. Do not fall for anyone who you feel you can fix or someone who needs your care. Find someone who is as independent as yourself. Who can come and go without placing all their worries in your heart.”

## TRUST

When he saw her, he saw who he was in a clearer light, and he laughed, and she laughed for she saw clearly in his mirror. Equal, they approached each other, and pressed up against the glass.

## THE MIRROR OF PERFORMANCE

Performer and audience tune into the same thing and surrender to it. Permission for that emotion to deepen becomes something both witness.

That’s the education of performing, the observation of aspects of ourselves that shine into the dynamics and the consciousness of the performance in this way that isn’t possible to deny. Often the

aspects of ourselves that arise in these situations surprise us. So that living up to, bearing witness to, your feelings as events on the supple shared stage that you hold as you perform is a process of self discovery. In it, you very publicly go through a sequence of doors. Embrace or shy from becoming comfortable with a range of emotions that are always beyond your capacity for them. The performance offers you the opportunity to pull emotions into your reality and explore. By doing so we build resilience, trust, and a willingness to surrender to the flow.

Travelling is similiar - when your experience is vulnerable, and without comforts of habit or habitation, it puts the impact of your actions into stark relief in the mirror of reality.

What makes love making and reading resemble each other most is that within both of them times and spaces open, different from measurable time and space.

- *Italo Calvino, If on a Winter's Night a Traveller, trans. by William Weaver, p.125.*

## HOPE

Trust in your journey. Trust in your dreams. Know you are wonderful, and best when full of joy. Protect that joy and spread its wonder. Because all we can do is to show that that another way is possible. Another life within society without so much of this stress on fulfillment and projecting the future and amassing wealth or status in paranoid wage slavery and hopes of becoming the oppressor. There are values that are held outside of this that remain valid and real.

Look to the Celtic mystics for inspiration and fellowship. Dig that seam rich.

“There are so many wonderful people” says Ivy. “They are everywhere.”

Recognise and thank the wonder you have.

Maintenance of the own rhythm. Trust that the rhythm is always there to tune into when time stops. Because we're always right here. And if your emotions scramble, the rhythm remains accessible. To return, just use the breath.

Love beyond confusion. Identify only with values, never with profession, partners, location. Honour this journey as valid. As important. As positive. Sit in your honesty and follow what is honest and joyful and do not doubt. Feel the beat of your heart, like the

tree in Amsterdam showed you. Know your honesty. Follow your joy. Foreground that. Until you are happy to sing the song that you have inside. The true song. No movement of emotion. No movement. No ascendancy. Just sing.

If men can liberate themselves from the negative aspects of the culture that produced them, maybe a just, fair, good and liberated society is possible in our lifetime.

- Haki R. Madhubuti, from 'Transforming a Rape Culture'

## MERGE

We are all carved by water, after all. Water builds its weight often invisibly. A swelling lip of hypertension at its top, as a steady trickle adds to its weight, massing a force that will soon spill a new route for animation. As it animates in a new direction water nests in insistent trenches. As long as it is moving, freezing to expand, evaporating to drift over the earth and join some new stream.

## WATTLE

“35 million salmon dumped  
up a hill in a landfill. North of Scotland.  
Imagine the fossil record.  
They’re gonna think that this was under the sea.”

## THE VAN GOUGH MUSEUM

In front of the Van Gogh paintings that really shone. It was like you were a fish in the stream. Spiralling from side to side to keep still in the current beamed at you. Your hips swaying, your body turning. Vibing.

You couldn’t choose which paintings would sing for you that day. The paintings themselves arranged that harmony. So that when you arrived into each room at the gallery, all you could do was note which was singing to you, and acknowledge it as it sang. Those paintings turned your body into a grass waving in the wind.

## MUSE

“It’s relationships,” she says, “man it’s really relationships that are *The Most* beautiful thing. That’s where we grow.”

This short travel - Lisbon 4 days, Amsterdam 3 days - was a chance to be alone. To be purely on my own vibe, which has been surfing the social web that I have woven. The abilities to navigate foreign spaces with gladness that I have picked up. Celebrating the talents of the friends I have met and am making. Seeing and sewing new constellations onto the fabric of my love.

Being alone with this wonderful being who my soul falls in love with, my eyes fall in love with, Eros stirs. And feeling in her a mutuality but hearing the circumstances. Not lamenting what isn't and what my feelings cannot do today. Celebrating with her what our moments are filled with. Such tenderness and joy. Hey, it is beautiful here. And hey,

I can take responsibility for my emotions. They are always my responsibility alone. When they arise, flare, diminish, all I can do is to honour myself: recognise my honesty.

When she wakes she laughs and says thank you for 24 more hours. She snoozes around her bed for an hour, waking at 6:30am, with the sounds of waves in the background and chimes as her alarm. She paints first thing for an hour or two. After that, whatever happens, it's been a good day, because she got to paint.

None of this can be recorded. No catalogue of her beliefs and gestures would recreate the stillness and giddy humour that run through her. Her feet will tap the electric shivers of joy as they jolt out of her.

Whoever sows to please their flesh,  
from the flesh will reap destruction;  
whoever sows to please the Spirit,  
from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

- *Galatians 6:8*

'PLACE DE CLICHY, PARIS' BY VAN GOGH

“Man made things are not all straight lines and boxes,” she says. “If you believe that then you fall into it. Everything is natural. You need to see it that way and appreciate how everything is still blessed, blasted and smoothed from the elements. So the sides of city buildings are still natural materials. Parts of nature that turn in the colours of the sun while wind crawls across them. And all these surfaces are moving, growing, stretching out into their new environs, on a clock that is only a little longer than our human one. If we could just see.

Stones cut from the bottom of a quarry acclima-

tise to the parapet of a tenement balcony. See their new vantage as they solidify in new airs. The stones sing as the sun wind rain snow leaves speak back to them on the balcony of a tenement in Rue de Gambetta.

No matter what, there is harmony. No matter you look at a forrest scene or the buildings around. There is a harmony, a singing that is of and is the song of the natural environment. To be an artist is to hear that song. And once the song is inside of you, to sketch it without interruption.”

## LANCES

You can only look out from where you are. How you are. The searching glance shot, borne of nerves will find only furtive looks in reply; shut shops, the city street blank, closed.

But to look when you have gentleness and kindness within your movements, and a belly full of breath, you will walk around the corner as couples lips stretch from their kisses. You will see children laughing, mothers smiling at their fumbles. The streets will unwrap as you reflect gladness back to it.

Each practice takes practice. A brittle stare finds no plump rewards. Loosed footsteps prance miracles.

## AYE COO

The Flute and Glee  
(Gluten free)  
Pub?

## DESCEND

Be back from travel, back to the land where you can ground. Plug into the space you’ve made. That isn’t day to day, but week to week and task to task. The space is prepared for you already by your compassionate self. Move to it with intention but without preparation.

Also by Luke Winter:

*The Water*

*Stories for Strangers vol. 1.*

*Life is Weird Enough*

*Stories for Strangers vol. 2.*

*Stories for Strangers vol. 3.*

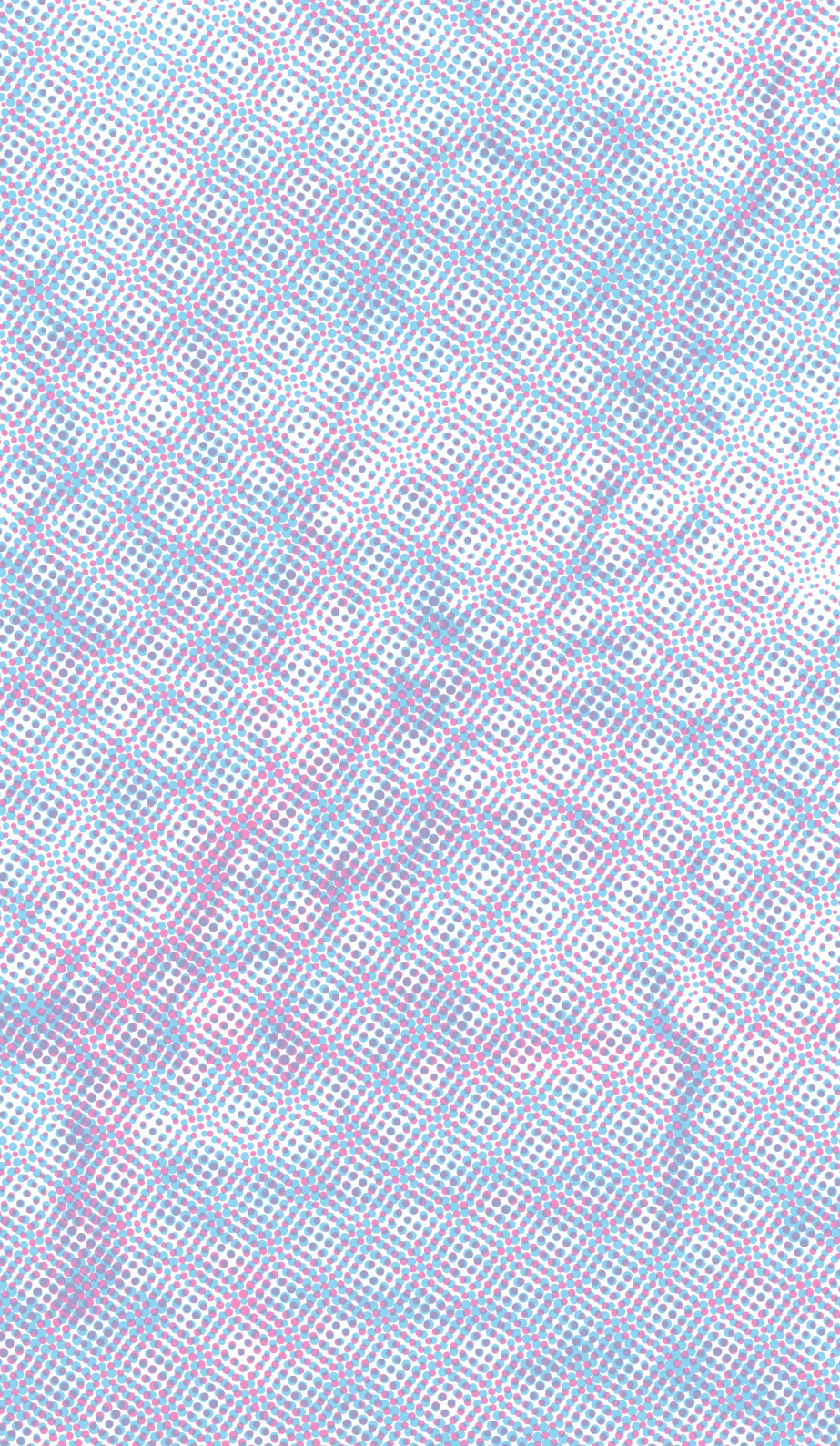
*Expectations are the Thieves of Joy*

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