

*Excerpts from*  
Nothing Human Is Alien to Me

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***\*The featured excerpts were written by Faith Hart.***

## ***Opening Monologue***

*The audience stands around the room on the outside of the curtains, facing inward. Sound plays as they enter and wait. Expectation and liquidy thumping. The following plays over a loudspeaker. There is one silence actor standing in the center, breathing with some physical force.*

This is a moment.

A pure, unadulterated moment. A moment with no other purpose than just to hold us together.

Has any ever moment before ever been quite like this one? I'll take my chances and bet on 'no'. Nothing- NOTHING- has ever smelled quite like this moment. All your sweat and- lotion?- your lunch seeping out of your pores and... something I can't quite place. Anticipation?

Your collective breathing. Your breath- it thrills and shames me. Don't worry, it smells good.

No, nothing ever was quite like this. No moment following it will compare. Don't be sad about it. Pleeceeeeeeeeeeease don't be sad here. If you can help it. It's okay if you are.

This is a big moment! Can you feel it? All of us, here, together! The expectancy. Something will happen, eventually. I promise. Don't worry- do not fret- it won't be hard.

Don't worry. This is a small moment. Teensy-weensy itty-bitty infinitesimal. Ants and sugar grains. YOU are so tiny, all of you! Each a collection of little teeth and fingers and nose hairs. I like that about you. You fit in just great.

I am glad you are here. The whole of you, and all your pieces, too. Your giant feet and lapping bellies and foreheads you always thought were a little too big. Make them even bigger. Make them known. Release the belly and get in my face with your big forehead. Press into what's under those big feet. Widen your eyes. But don't forget! You can use your teeny tiny teeth and fingers and nose hairs here, too. Please do. They're here for you. I am, too. Dig in it the dirt. Roll in the laundry. Bite into me. Don't be afraid to swallow. I'm gonna peel off every last bit of shame off you. I'm gonna peel you like an or-...

Anyway.

I'm here for you. You're here for me, too. Let's fall into rapture. Don't you dare hesitate. Taste the air. The dust of us. Radiation. Ecstasy. Unzip ourselves. Roll in the grass. Drink up. Map the stars. Look down fear. Smell the flowers- all that shit. Blow the seeds. Re-name colors. Name them after ourselves. Hush the noise. Expand when heated.

It is time.

*Music plays. The silent actor in the center is born- gloriously, terrifyingly.*

## ***Eternal Dancer***

*adapted for the stage from "Saetas: Studying Flamenco in the Midst of Life and Death"  
by Catherine Taylor, published by Believer Mag*

*(Eternal Dancer enters and strikes a bold, graceful pose. She holds it. She looks at the audience like she's expecting something. It doesn't read. She breaks it. It falls far, far away.)*

My 50th year is cold and classic. The earth's rotation has picked up speed. At night, star trails striped the sky. Mumbling to myself on the way home from work- no one listening when I speak. Bleak dreams and the occasional, vibrant nightmare. In the day, just panic. So many things I can't do over. Or even just do.

So little time left. "With one's hair flying back like the tail of a race-horse. Yes, that seems to express the rapidity of life, the perpetual waste and repair; all so casual, all so haphazard." Virginia Woolf.

It's the usual story. Early wildness turned into a life doubled down on duty. It's changed me. Something vital lost. An exoskeleton of anxieties has made it hard to move. Bones stiffer than ever. Cowardice in full swing. Age is making me babyish; I feel robbed. I'm always talking about how much I've been robbed. My mother dies. I scream at a teenage, pimple-faced waiter for no reason. Slowly, friends begin to follow- bodies falling apart, exploding, eating themselves, coming to an end.

My father moves into a retirement home. Longview. Over jello, dad cracks, "No need for the long view when the story's almost over." There, every day fades the same. Nobody there feels the weather. Many may never leave the grounds. Nobody there is dancing.

I have to turn away from this future.

Towards what?

*(Time morphs. Leaves crunch.)*

I stand on crunching leaves, a burnt color. They're dying, too. I am looking for my mother's grave but another catches my eye. Carved in stone are two epitaphs divided by a thin slash, as if I needed to choose one dark thought: *c'est la vie* / *be still*.

The approaching end, right there in the ground. I want to look up. Days seem futile.

*(She snaps out of it.)*

The planet is ending. You know that, right?

You know, I once read Heidegger's *Being and Time* in a college philosophy course- "Sein-zum-Tode"- the beautiful necessity of being-toward-death. The ecstasy of possibilities provided by the future and its end. The way the death inside you can take you outside of yourself. I guess *Being and Time* has been buried under junk and errands. As was being and time.

A week passes.

A friend calls to say she's performing in a flamenco show with some guys from Spain and I should come. I'm mildly embarrassed even just talking about it. I go.

*(The space shifts- club lights, music, crowdedness, fever, discovery.)*

*(over the music)* Reckless vibration

Pounding

Feverish

*(Shamed, excited)* Half the dancers look older than me

Ecstasy

Rapture

It's too much. *(Music slightly lowers. She falls. Tries to catch her breath.)*

Flamenco feels like vertigo. A plummet.

Meaning made in forward motion.

Attack and haven. Loss of self.

*She snaps out of this time and space.*

The real world suddenly looks strange.

Something has begun. At home, El Lebrijano wails on repeat. A vital portal. Flamenco is not just dizzying rhythms... heartbreaking cries... but audacity. Agelessness.

*(A poster literally shows up out of nowhere.)*

A poster advertising a flamenco workshop appears on the bulletin board at the food co-op. I go.

Everything is pried open.

A little space appears between every piece of air.

*(Something is rising)* It is one thing to listen to the music. It is another to stand in front of the mirror and begin to dance. Even badly. Stand up. Lift your arms. Now the hands. What is the word for the flamenco rotation of the wrists? It is “yes”. Or maybe, “oh yes”. Or, “*what the hell was I doing for all those years before this?*” You should try it. Try it right now. Head up. Then, slowly the wrists. A “*fuera*”. A “*dentro*”. To the outside. To the inside. A route opens. When you straighten your spin and raise your arms, confidence begins to rise. It is chemical and historical.

*(A saeta plays. Eternal Dancer either holds her powerful pose or begins to dance. Maybe the audience dances, maybe they stand still. The song lowers.)*

A saeta is not quite a song. It is longing and devotion. A saeta expresses a kind of gratitude stung by grief. A saeta sweeps you up: just move towards the next moment of devotion.

“Saeta” can also mean the hand of a clock, an arrow, a dart, a bud on a vine, a magnetic needle. How is possible to keep all those meanings resonating? The passing of time, the painful barb, the new growth, the pull to navigate it all.

*(The song stops. Something is broken.)*

A small feeling lingers- the feeling that being older means nothing is as precious and as full of potential as it once was. Part of me mourns everything. Small devastation for anything that slips past the train

window. Tree, row of grass, tree, row of grass, power line, power line. The clickety clack of I'll never do this, I'll never do that.

*(Eternal Dancer offers the audience a drink. They drink together.)*

Small moments peel this off. The concrete factory's yellow girders and blue metal wheels, a red dump truck idling, orange-y leaves littering the street. Seven shades of green. I move into a smaller apartment to afford more flamenco classes. My only grievance is less room to dance. I drink beer with classmates after every session, and I'm not embarrassed when I'm the oldest one there. I wear a black plastic jacket every day. I wear lace-up boots with fake fur every day. I wear my new earrings: brass hoops with little seed studs.

*(Eternal Dancer rises boldly, playfully. She embodies the teacher and the student, giving orders and responding with precision. The energy intensifies. She gets lost.)*

I spend all my money on beer and flamenco classes. "Planta, tacon, tacon." My teacher says, "Zip yourself up from your cunt to your breast." The entire room rises and I don't know how to name the fierceness that fastens us together. It feels like everything I've ever wanted. I make a kind of friendship of glances with the body next to mine day after day. My t-shirt is always damp and sweaty. "Don't just do the steps," the teacher says, "dance." I miss a step. "No corré!" the teacher yells. "No corré! Joder. You're fucking us up. Uno dos tres. Quatro cinco seis. Seite. Ocho. Nueve. Diez. Un Dos. Uno dos tres." Listen to the pattern. Do it. Do it again. Do it again. Do it more. Keep doing it. New muscles on the side of my lower legs. There is no other life. The teacher yells, "Make more noise with your feet! Harder! Too weak. Be stronger. Find your power. You need it. Think what you can do if you find your power." Keep pushing. Chin up. Dig deeper in your hips. You can do it. Tip the foot outward. Feel it in your belly. Breathe. "Lean forward! Tip your hips! Stand up straight!" Strike the foot! Harder! Fiercer! Keep going! Keep going! Keep going, keep going, keep going, keep going, keep going-

*She dances and continues until she is breathless. She collapses. We watch her chest rise and fall, her body a small universe.*

*(breathless)* It is a passage to something else: resolve, determination, assurance, nerve, confidence, boldness, verve, élan, strength, drive, resilience, and resistance. Today is part of tomorrow. I no longer mind that I'll be old in that tomorrow or that I might not live into it.

## Ode to Orgasm

*SHE lays on the back with her head towards the audience. Immediately as the scene starts, she reaches her peak. She falls back, breathes, flips over and begins talking to the audience. Soon it's clear she's not really talking to the audience.*

One time, when I was twelve, I sat open-legged on my bathroom counter in front of the mirror screaming to my mother that I couldn't find my clitoris and I probably just didn't have one. All of my ex-boyfriends seemed content to concur with this logic. We were wrong.

Finding you was the first step of a divine and arduous process known as Letting The Fuck Go. The end of worrying if I Would Be Good at Sex more than I wondered if Sex Would Be Good For Me. I was not made for gifting bliss with no expectation of reciprocity. I am not a Pez dispenser. Or an ignition. It's important for me to say that. It's important for everyone in this room to know that. I think I'd rather just be a human, but if you must understand me through metaphor, Be more creative. Like a molten volcano or a steaming geyser, Or a Venus fly trap. But the point is- finding you on my own terms was the beginning of realizing that all of *this*, all of *you* existed regardless of whether or not someone else was in the room. You are under no one's gaze. You require the silencing of shame and doubt and hurting. You require me to see myself as a vessel for only good things. An arrival at relief, and warmth, and light. Intentional, divine release of control. You appear at the snap of my fingers. ... or maybe some other configuration of my fingers. You are the holiest thing I've ever held in my hands. You are a reclamation. You are literally life-giving. You are a lesson in discipline. When the effort is put in, you are harder, longer, and more frequent than your male "equivalent". Why do we talk about you- something so powerful, so present- like it's elusive?



I think if we started thinking of you as less of a mythical occurrence and more of a mandated, expected magic, the world would probably change. For good.

You're a powerful ripple of strength. You're a gentle flow.

You are a slowly catching fire and goose bumps, all over.

You're every color I've ever seen and some I don't have names for.

You're more than a moment. More than euphoria.

Your impact lingers,

A doctrine of worthiness.

A loosening and a rattling and a breaking of chains.

A mandate on deep breathing.

My voice finally free, not to be heard. Just to be free.

Just to be free.