





I.

The child's hands were made of spikes which meant she wasn't really welcome anywhere in the village. It's been suggested that these early experiences of ostracization were a key influence on her later philosophical tracts.

II.

“Are you trying to get a rise out of me?” said the President.  
“Maybe I am,” said the President’s son as he stumbled drunkenly out of the room, tossing a pinch of imaginary salt over his shoulder, biting at his bottom lip as though the nation’s very existence depended on it.

III.

A sofa appeared. I lay down on the sofa and fell asleep. When I woke up a few hours later the sofa had disappeared and I was standing on a beach swarming with birds. One of the birds began to speak to me. I ignored them and put on my headphones and started navigating back to my apartment. The sky was coloured pink like the inside of a hotdog. For some reason my heart felt like it was melting.

IV.

TIME

"time"

STONE

"stone"

FLOWER

"flower"

LIGHT

"light"

WATER

"water"

SHADOW

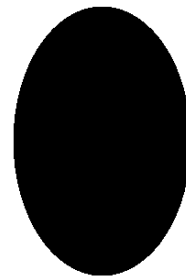
"shadow"

DIRT

"dirt"

SKY

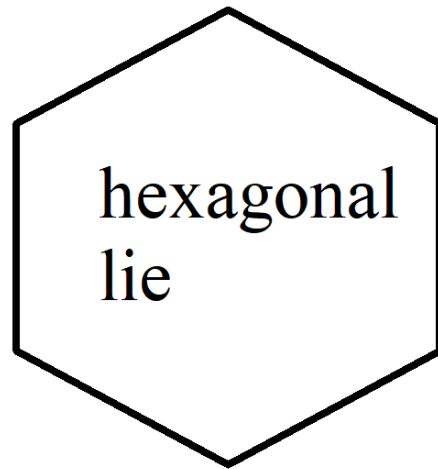
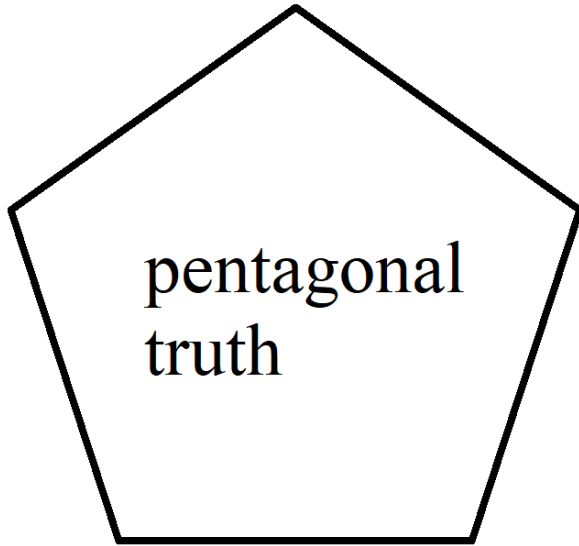
"sky"



V.

The poet stood by her apartment's only window, studying the rain as it beat repeatedly against the glass. The apartment was tiny with no furniture except for a desk and an inflatable mattress. Hundreds of books littered the floor in precariously-leaning stacks. The poet had been there for nearly a year, working on something she wasn't quite sure what to call yet. The poet wasn't even sure what she was doing could be considered "poetry". But then what did she know of except for "poetry"? the poet thought to herself with an unexpected stab of despondence. A gust of wind shook the window and slightly unsure of why she was doing what she was presently doing the poet leaned forward, pressing her forehead against the glass. The glass was cold and wet with condensation. It reminded the poet of a massive glass of Coke. Spurred on by some curious desire the poet began to press harder and harder, as though trying to pass through the window, to escape the room she was in and eliminate any distance between her and whatever lay beyond it. "Are things really so impermeable," the poet wondered aloud, practically screaming it.

VI.



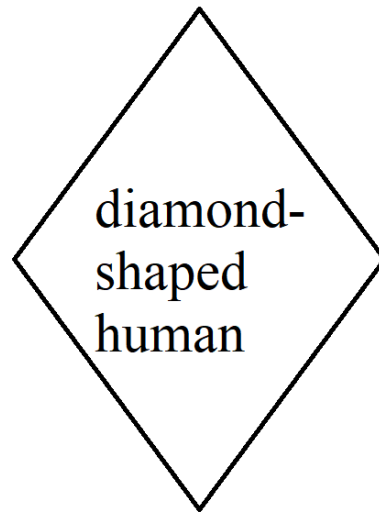
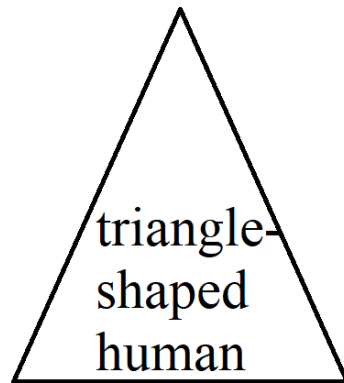
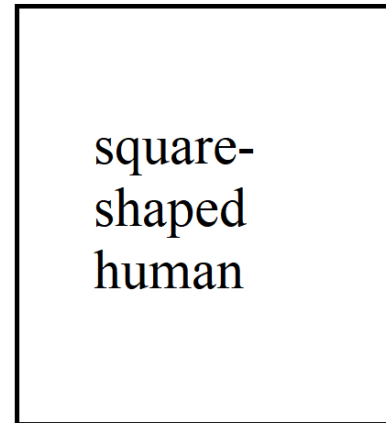
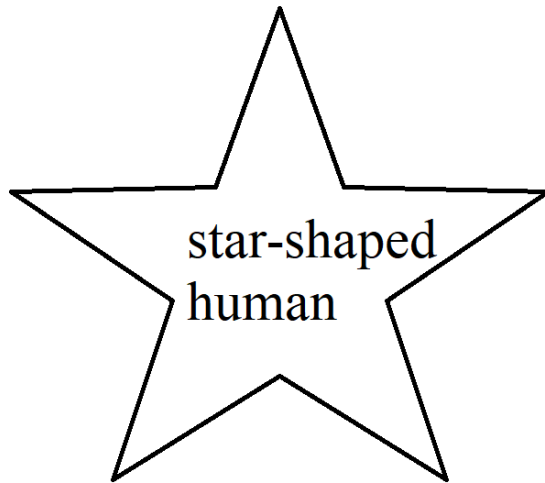
## VII.

The boy was made of pine. He didn't know why. He didn't know where he was from. He wanted to write poetry, that's all he knew. If his heart and brain were of pine instead of flesh, then so be it, he thought. That was just his lot in life, and he would press forward despite the obstacles the universe threw before him. Situations were contingent, the boy had learned. To succeed in this fallen world, you sometimes had to ignore anything anybody said to you. The boy stared at himself in the mirror. If he cut his hair he would look more handsome, the boy thought. Outside the trees shook in the ever-intensifying storm.

## VIII.

I'm not a hero, the priest explained. Money fell out of his pockets and into the moon-dappled river. Everybody in the audience grew bored. The protagonist emptied his revolver into the wine-red sky, tears slicing through the several layers of dirt caked to his face. It was September and already snowing. A t-shirt hung on a peg on a wall. A fly you couldn't bring yourself to swat away crawled along the rim of your mug, and you spoke to it as though you knew it from another life, a life where you were both soldiers in the same army. Nothing here is really yours, you said. All you see is crass illusion. Life is a lie you believe while you're speaking it. Death is a word you pronounce incorrectly on purpose.

IX.



XI.

Noises from outside startled him awake. Cursing he maneuvered his pillow over both ears, feeling cold and nauseous and as though some tennis ball-sized vacuum was expanding inside his chest. He coughed, and his entire body shook, violently like the engine of a car backfiring. For several seconds he grew more and more nervous about his “life-situation” but then he sat up and drank some water from a glass beside his bed. The water made him feel better almost instantly. It struck him as somewhat idiotic, how easily he vacillated between “good” and “bad”. “I doubt I’ll ever know enough about my life to feel any concrete way about it,” he mused as a series of elaborate shadows shifted across the room’s walls. Somewhere in the ceiling a pipe began to rattle. He lay back down and closed his eyes and throughout the night dreamt again and again of frozen lakes, blanketed with snow, with long lines of people trekking hurriedly across them, as though determined to escape from some horrible thing.

XII.

~~ABC~~

~~JKL~~

~~DEF~~

~~PQR~~

~~VWX~~

~~GHI~~

~~STU~~

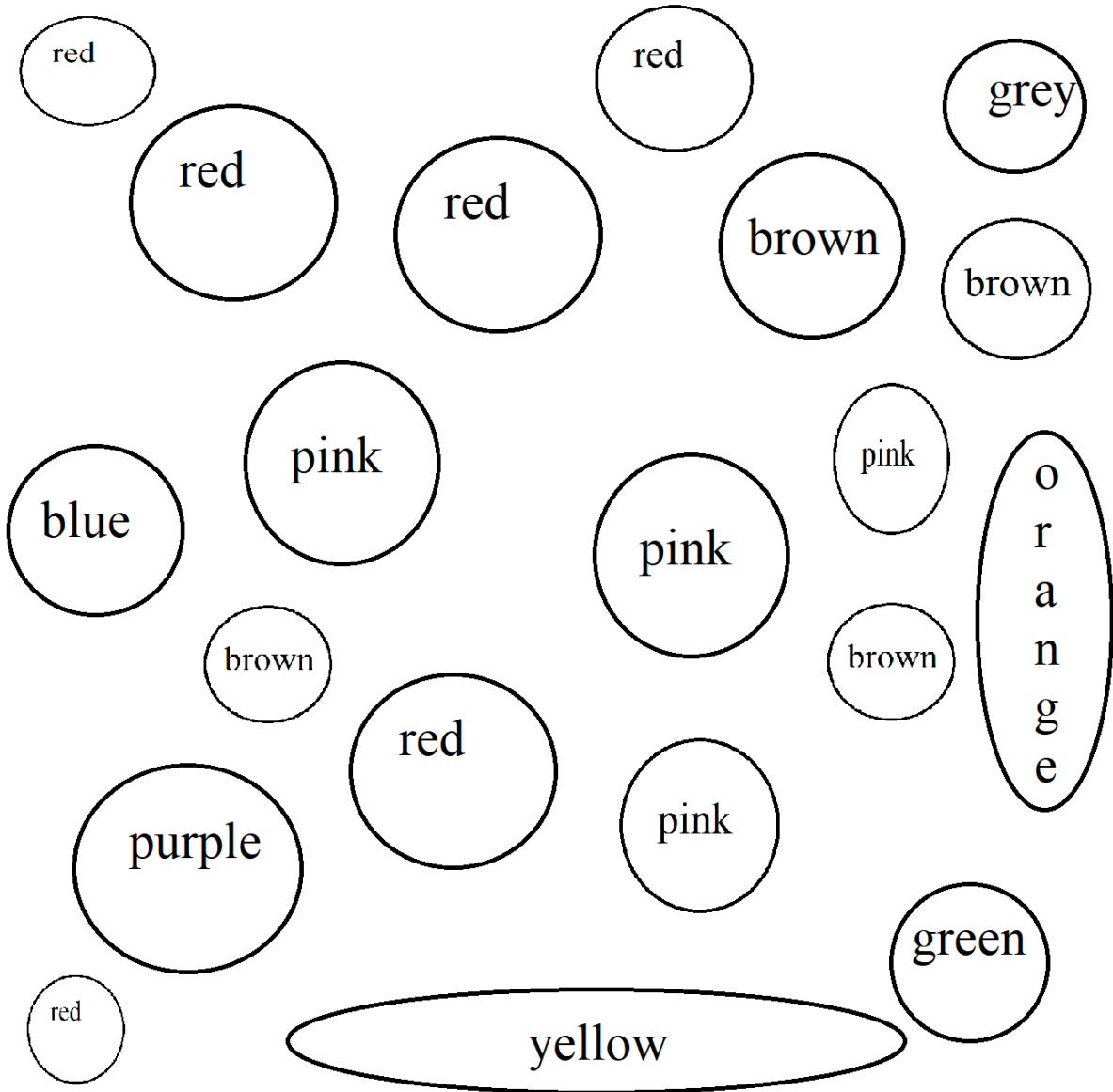
~~YZ~~

~~MNO~~

### XIII.

She felt bogged down by a million different things. She wanted to move somewhere new but she couldn't decide where to move to. Everywhere seemed either too near or too far away. A few hours later she crawled out of bed and went to the kitchen and made herself a cup of coffee. "Coffee," she declared, as though having just invented the beverage herself. Without really thinking about it too much she decided she would go visit the lake that afternoon. To get to the lake took her around forty-five minutes by bus. Words would only obfuscate the significance of the visit and so suffice it to say that it was "something else entirely". Basically a psychedelic trip. When she finally returned to her apartment that evening she felt changed totally, such that it made her slightly nervous to even talk to others about it.

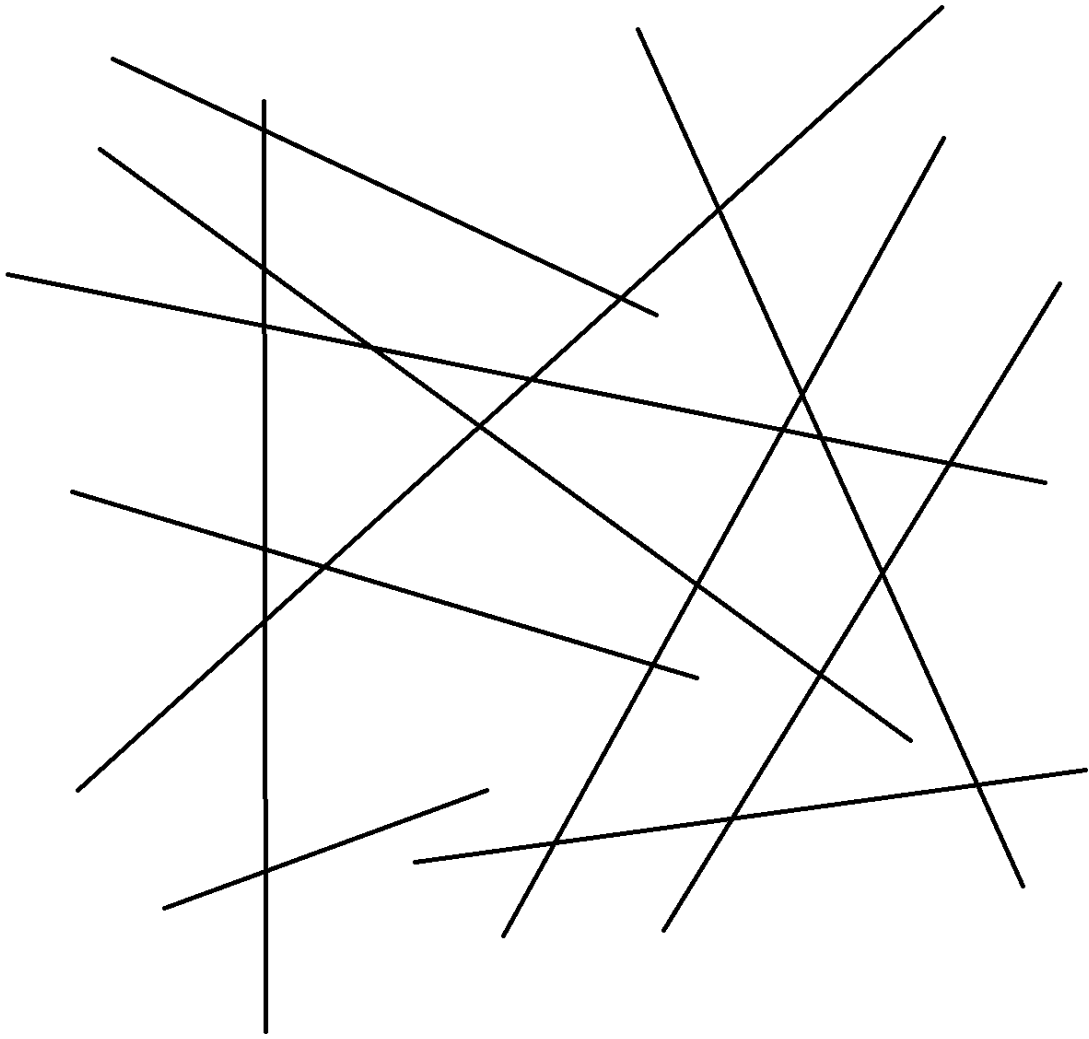
XIV.



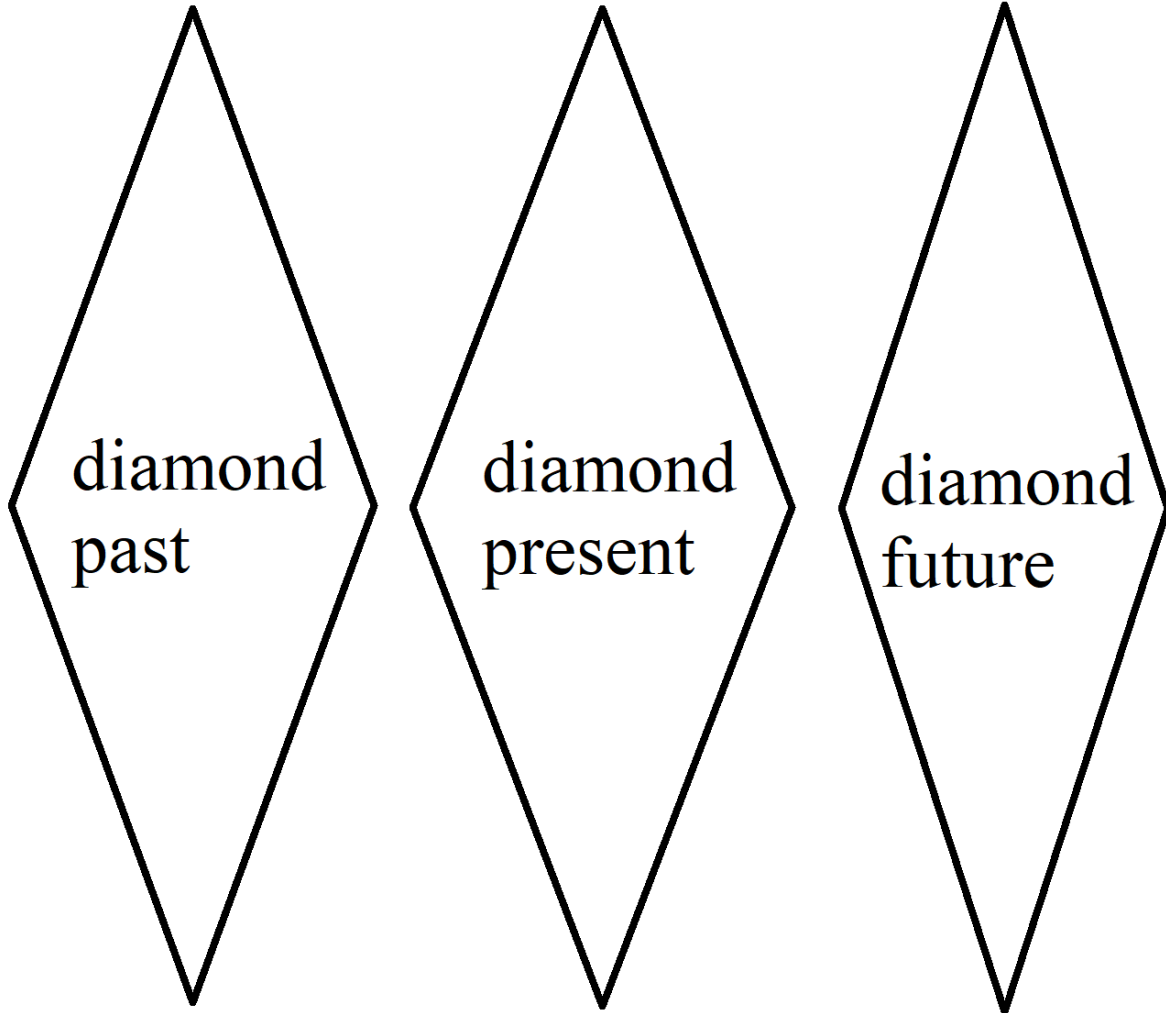
XVI.

I let my mind go blank, blank the way a sunset can be blank, blank like the very bottom of the ocean, and some time later, I'm not sure how much time later exactly, I spoke the first few words that drifted into my hyper-hollowed out mind. "Everything that exists in this place," I said, "contains its own opposite." And in that very instant I was set free.

XVII.



XVIII.





XX.

