WAR LETTER TO THE VOID

Poems on Meaning, Freedom, and the Absurd

Jane Devyn

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Disclaimer:
This book is a work of philosophical poetry intended for literary and contemplative purposes. It is not intended as psychological, medical, or legal advice. The reflections expressed in these pages are poetic interpretations of philosophical ideas and should be received as personal and artistic exploration rather than prescriptive guidance.

For Jason and Dwayne:
I can't leave you certainties,
but I can leave you the freedom to build your own.
I'll watch you grow, each in your own way.

For those who look at the void and still build:
there's no net here, no promises.
Just a place to start from.

CONTENTS

Prologue: Letter to Those Seeking Their Why 10
Author's Note 12

CHAPTER 1 — The Vertigo of Possibility 15

At the Edge of the Bridge 16
Faith with the Lights Off 17
Choosing Myself Today 18
The Wake 19
The Useful Vertigo 20
Alone Before the Infinite Mirror 21
Three Paths Beneath Your Feet 22
The Repetition That Saves 24
Fear and Trembling 25
The Despair That Awakens 26
The Instant That Splits Time 27
After the Leap 28

CHAPTER 2 — Hammer and Dance 30

Clean Hammer 32
There Are No Facts 33
The Judge Within 34
The Herd 36
Will That Carves Shape 38
Amor Fati 40
The Last Man 41
If Everything Returned 42
Dancing on Ruins 44
Zarathustra Laughs 45
The New Weight of Words 46
Three Skins 48
Noon Without Shadow 50
Beyond Good and Evil 52

Health at Heights 54
Zarathustra Descends to the City 56

CHAPTER 3 — Will and Compassion 59

Dark Animal That Drives 60
Beneath the Veil 61
Respite in the Concert Hall 62
Seeing Myself in You 64
Between Hunger and Weariness 65
Turning Off the Engine 66
Everyone's Pain 67
The Score of the World 68
Thirst Without Shore 70
Asceticism Without Temple 71
Ethics Without Pedestal 72
One Disguised as Many 73
Letting Go to See 74

CHAPTER 4 — Condemned to Be Free 77

Nausea in the Café 78
Exist First 80
The Alibis of the Self 82
Hell of Mirrors 84
Eyes That Objectify 86
Laminated Paper 87
Armored Mask 88
Project Thrown into the World 90
Signature on the Receipt 93
The Wound of Choosing 95
Situated Freedom 97
Being and Nothingness 98
Autopsy of a Gesture 99
Authenticity Under Suspicion 101
The Door, Always Open 105

CHAPTER 5 — Stone and Smile 111

Clarity About the Absurd 112
Stone Uphill 113
Stranger in My Own Home 114
The Leap I Won't Take 116
Sober Rebellion 117
Rebel's Manual 118
Mediterranean Salt 119
Sisyphus's Smile 120
Neither Victim nor Executioner 121
Absurd Solidarity 122
The Inner Plague 124
Moving Head-On 126
After the Stone 128
I Build My Purpose 131

Epilogue: Note to Those Who Decided to Build 133

PROLOGUE: Letter to Those Seeking Their Why

I know why you're here. Something broke. Maybe it happened slowly, a crack you ignored until it was wide enough to fall into, or maybe it happened in a single morning, when you woke up and nothing tasted the way it used to. Either way, something that used to hold you no longer does.

Success didn't fill what it promised. The answers you inherited worked for a while, until your questions grew heavier than they could carry. So now you're falling, and while you fall you keep wondering whether there's a bottom, whether there's a net, whether any of this was supposed to mean something in the first place.

Maybe you tried control. You read the Stoics, you meditated, you put your days in order, and it helped, up to a point. Then you reached the place control can't touch, where you know exactly how to keep going and still have no idea what you're going for.

That's where this book begins. Five voices move through it, and none of them looked away from the abyss. Kierkegaard found the terror hidden inside possibility and refused to cure it with certainty. Nietzsche took a hammer to the values he'd inherited and kept only what survived the blow. Schopenhauer looked at suffering without pretending it was an accident, and found compassion at the bottom of it. Sartre took away every excuse we use to avoid being free. Camus faced a universe that wouldn't answer him and pushed the stone anyway. They don't agree with one another, and I haven't tried to make them. What they share is a question none of them dodged: how do you live when meaning doesn't come included?

These poems take that question out of the lecture hall and leave it where it actually hurts, in the job you've stayed in too long, in the life you slipped into without choosing, in the bedroom at three in the morning when success goes quiet and leaves you alone with everything it failed to answer. You won't find a system here, or a promise that everything happens for a reason. If success has left you wondering what any of it was worth, or if you've reached the point where easy answers insult you more

than silence does, you'll recognize yourself in these pages.

I won't promise you'll be happier when you close this book, but I promise you'll be more honest. I won't tell you your purpose is out there somewhere, waiting patiently to be discovered, because I don't believe it is. The world doesn't owe you meaning. You can build it anyway. Start now. Build while you fall.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This book was born from a crisis, and the crisis arrived as a question that kept coming back, each time more honest and more unsettling: I've put my life in order, so now what? I had discipline. I didn't have a why.

That's when I understood something nobody tells you about Stoicism. It's powerful. It can teach you to steady yourself, to breathe, to control what depends on you. But it only solves half the problem. It shows you how to stand without telling you what you're standing for, and that "what for" is exactly what breaks when a crisis of meaning arrives. It's a crisis running through a lot of us now, through anyone who has spent years checking off goals only to find silence waiting behind them.

That silence is what led me to existentialism. Not the kind buried in impossible books, but the kind that grabs you by the collar and forces you to face yourself. It doesn't promise answers. What it offers is harder and, to me, more valuable: the freedom to build your own.

Each chapter in this book is part of that journey from emptiness toward a purpose that didn't exist before you made it. It isn't heroic, and it doesn't move neatly upward. Sometimes you go backward. Sometimes you sink deeper before anything changes. Nietzsche jolts you, and then Schopenhauer reminds you that pain is also part of the map. Sartre exposes you. Camus rebuilds you.

The aphorisms at the ends of the poems aren't there to sound pretty. They're small commands, small tools: choose, hold, create, rebel, continue. Without action, existentialism becomes nihilism dressed up.

I owe you an honest warning as well. This is a dark book. It talks about death, meaninglessness, the nausea of existence and the weight of freedom, and it doesn't sweeten any of them. But there is a kind of hope in that rawness that doesn't go out easily. It appears when you reach the bottom, stop pretending it isn't there, and realize you can build from there too.

These pages are my war letter to the void. Not to destroy it, but to use it as material. The answer you're looking for isn't printed anywhere in this book. It's you, building yourself one day at a time.

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