

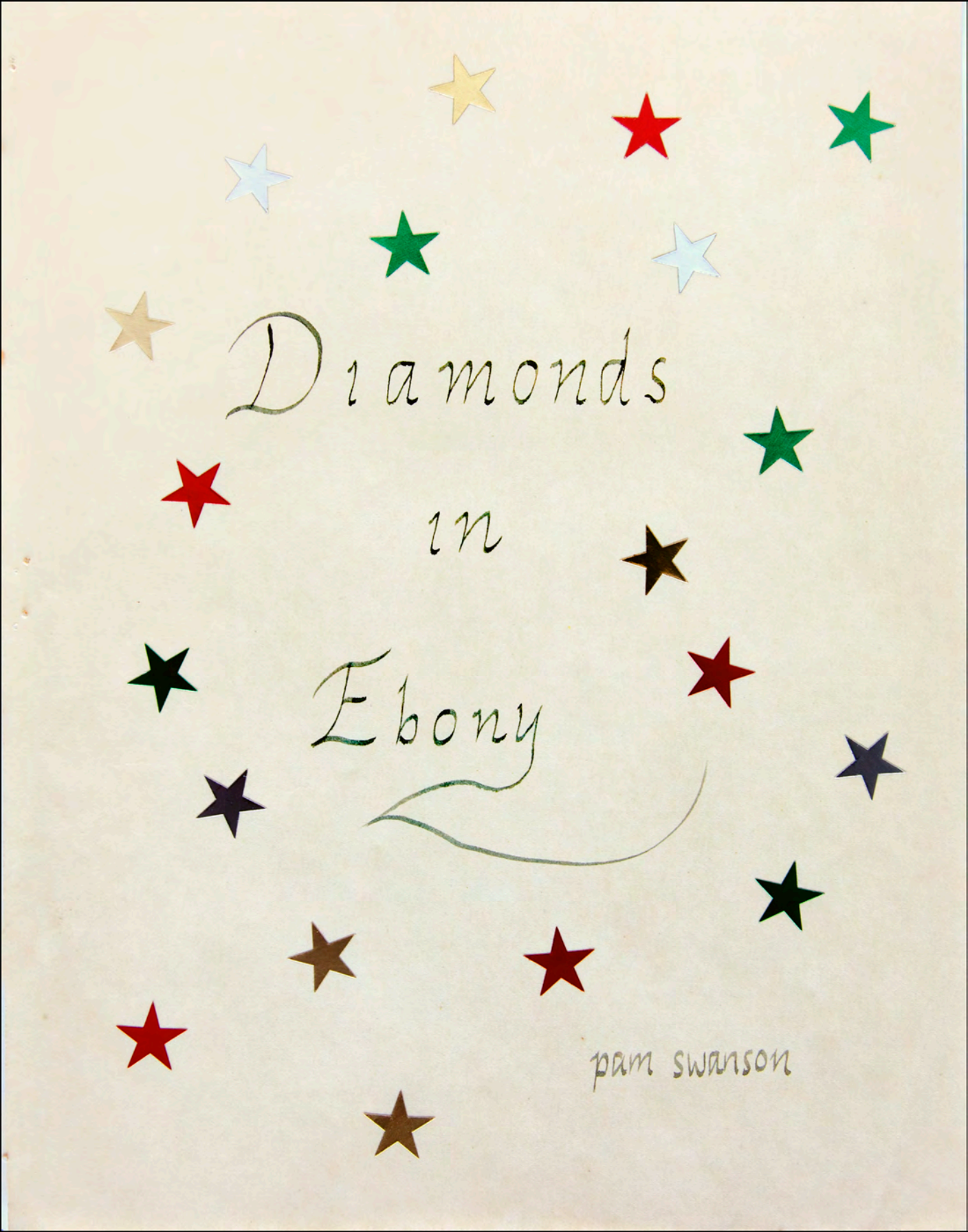
Diamonds

in

Ebony

pam swanson





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we shall call these moments magical  
snapshot recollections trapping time  
and faces into gatherings that are  
no longer real and maybe never were -  
light disintegrates and intimates  
a spectral audience overlapping  
days that were with days that may or may not  
ever be - like phantom photographs  
that will not be remembered or denied  
by any who have not seen through our eyes -

a picture permanence of motionless  
activity - suspending and writing  
ageless visions of infinity.





II



a moment now for memories - where to begin? back in nineteenth century two on sherbrooke street we met as students of the royal columbian nursing school - you were the only married student living with your husband in a house on london street - i was the only single student who moved out of residence to rent the large room cornering your basement -

private entrance -  
separate hours - shift work - studying -  
uniforms and evenings at the pub -  
could we have believed the happenings  
waiting to twist and rearrange the dozen  
searching years between the now and then?



morning at the kitchen table drinking  
orange clove tea and eating peanut butter  
toast and fruit and cheddar cheese ~  
we watch a hazy sun play shadow trees  
across the lawn like thought waves dancing music  
through our minds ~ we have met many times  
and places ~ sharing laughter's tears and lives  
that meet to separate and meet again ~  
we are not the people we were then  
and are not the people we will be  
but no alterations can erase  
what is already ours ~ sun and shadow  
playing leaves of grass ~ and as we watch  
old worlds fade and new ones rise in place.





IV



From where? this miracle of hours that we  
weave - dipping in and out of time  
to recreate a pattern of lives  
in ways that we have yet to understand -  
where to? this spell of wine and coffee talk  
forging destinies we dared not dream  
inside the rituals of space and time  
that did not let us see beyond our skins -

one by one the stars awaken us  
to friends and friends like families of thought  
gathering us into the galaxies  
of constellations circling our names  
until the very universe expands  
and multiplies in worlds that are ours.





years of intensity ~ remember phobos?  
the kitten i was given and then gave  
to you because i was so rarely home?  
sharing animals and friends and tasting  
oatmeal raisin cookies from the oven ~  
we talked of hospitals and erratic  
families and marriages that were not  
made in heaven ~ i graduated nursing  
in three years ~ you withdrew to have  
an operation on your back ~

and then  
phobos died ~ you and your husband moved  
away and i moved out ~ neither of us  
sure if lives would cross again or if  
we could grow our own realities.



light a single candle to remind  
raise a glass of wine to toast the sun -  
distance shrinks to insignificance  
when ears are tuned to inside listening -

look - the flame vibrates and leaps response  
communing with your reaching silences -  
the sun dives and refracts through wine to waltz  
in golden silhouettes across the floor -

there is no photograph that can contain  
and no written word that can explain  
the mysteries of upward travelling  
arising from a year of in between -

the spells of once can never be undone -  
light a single candle to remind,





VII



We crack like mirrors slowly from the bottom  
to the top ~ splitting side to side ~  
splintering and shattering until  
we cannot hold ourselves intact ~ breaking  
outwards ~ fissuring into a thousand  
jagged pieces ~ we feel our bodies being  
gradually relentlessly unmade ~  
falling apart as if preparing to  
be reassembled rearranged refocused  
in another age and place that holds  
our names in altered patterns until  
illusions of a past we used to believe  
blur into the now that we perceive  
reflecting us into our separate worlds.



VIII



you worked the niton junction general store  
stocking shelves and overbalancing  
unbalanced books ~ I waitressed and washed dishes  
at the restaurant of the toronto groaning  
board ~ you got divorced ~ I left my lover ~  
you moved south and I moved west ~ letters  
dropped from rare skies to connect our one-way  
conversations and occasionally  
between the twisted crossings of the years  
we stumbled into spacetime intersections  
to talk an accidental midnight wild  
and disappear inside unearthly dawns ~  
then you reentered nursing school and I  
became a white ghost on the graveyard shift,





IX



here now the separateness of one and one  
combines to magnify the promises  
of unborn summers autumns winters springs  
that in sharing grow into your own ~

here now a haunting melody of love  
captures distances that can't be reached  
alone ~ pulsing unspoken destinies  
awakening the more that you become ~

here now a quiet linking of your hands  
recreates your future histories  
drawing you more deeply into dreams  
and challenges that were not yours before ~

words exchange in rings to symbolize  
the magic of the worlds you are growing.



I think that we were warriors once ~ riding  
deserts unto mountain skies ~ wise  
in wars and skirmishes spanning a thousand  
centuries that armed us in the brilliance  
of the blade ~ born and born and born  
and born again as comrades and as kin  
we tasted metal fire earth and blood  
through our endless reawakenings ~

the swords we wield are now invisible  
as lives pulse within lives and unto lives  
but we are comrades still ~ battling  
the subtleties of time and learning a  
new mastery of space that deepens and  
expands our spiralling realities.





XI



you graduated nursing school to work  
vancouver hospitals ~ I gradually  
withdrew into the turpentine and paints -  
living almost next door we visited  
between conflicting shifts trying to  
reshape the fears that drove us in and out  
of families - planning and replanning  
the horizons of our great escape -  
running away to find ourselves you left  
for the deserts of arabia  
and I moved to a mountain hideaway ~

it was the distances that taught us how  
to dive our inner kingdoms and emerge  
in promises that we could dare to believe.



XII



did you hear her ask for innocence?  
did you hear him trying to define  
the magic of its shape? they catch a scent  
of lilacs swimming down and above the laughters  
of a morning rich in rain until  
no moment can outshine their eye exchange  
reflecting and expanding flowers and skies  
and smiles and wisdoms shared ~ as if no one  
had ever seen or heard or touched or believed  
before and never would again the plunge  
into a kaleidoscope of images  
exploding and imploding hours and years  
within a growing sea of timelessness  
to find that innocence was always theirs,





XIII



an old man of the sidewalk sips his beer  
then hides it dark inside his overcoat -  
a young girl chases purple butterflies  
in and out of summer flowered yards -  
walking arm in arm beneath the trees  
a man and woman watch the paradox  
until the old man shuffles out of sight  
and the child stops to smell a rose  
nodding white against a wooden fence -  
she draws the couple over to explore  
soft petals tumbling a yellow core  
with dark leaves spreading green - attention dives  
into a flower's breath - wrapping the couple  
long after the child has raced on.



passing years returned us to vancover  
to recollect illusions we had lived  
laying old ghosts to rest while gathering  
our phantom lives into new images  
arising from dimensions we had dreamed -  
and as beginnings grow out of each end  
we grew out of the autumn winter sprung  
to enter summer wise in sun and rain  
preparing energies to escalate  
beyond familiar patterns - weaving  
and spinning choices into differences  
of alternate directions - our futures summon  
inexorably - but we will meet again  
inside the where of some unknown when.





standing arms linked with field silhouettes  
they stare the empty fullness of a sky  
cascading stars ~ moon at full and rising  
golden white ~ casting them as part  
and yet apart from deep night solitudes  
echoing an endlessness of space ~

like children of the infinite they watch  
waiting wise where no clouds intrude  
and where no winds disrupt the shadow trees  
trying to unearth a deep recall  
that haunts the recesses of memory  
as if somehow the star complexities  
contained the fullness of forgotten dreams  
and the people they have yet to be.





this is the future memory you grew  
inside the half forgotten daydreams of some  
yesterday ~ it is your love that slices  
through the camouflage of distances  
to bind you friend and friend inside the now ~

this is the tomorrow that awakened  
when eyes first met eyes and recognized  
more than the moment could express ~ and this  
is the yesterday that underlies  
the lives that you are promising to share ~

this is the forever pivoting  
the growing magic of your love into  
the unexplored ~ until all yesterdays  
and all tomorrows sprung out of this hour.





XVII



we will find one more evening to consume  
ourselves in talk ~ an intense finale  
to this era that is drawing to a  
close ~ there are underground commitments  
that we have not faced ~ neither of us  
willing to let go and both of us  
feeling the differences that haunt our inner  
thoughts ~ we shall meet once more to seal  
our private circle of eternity  
before we free ourselves to grow beyond  
this inbetween ~ the earth is spinning us  
to different hemispheres and we must move  
into the power of our destinies  
while learning to connect with inside ears,



diamonds in ebony ~ nights  
of single stars ~ as she follows ~ as he  
follows visions to be shared ~ love  
creates and recreates the courage to  
believe and live the possibilities  
of impossible dreams ~ brilliant laughters  
dance white gold where separate lives align  
until the heavens magnify a dual  
universe ~ as he enters ~ as she  
enters futures that are theirs ~ morning  
star joins evening star and midnight skies  
converge ~

like diamonds in ebony  
ringed in white white gold ~ out of which  
a hundred thousand galaxies explode.