



T A K E

P E A C E

H E A L I N G E N V I R O N M E N T S



The gloom of the world is but a shadow.

Behind it, yet within our reach, is joy.

FRA GIOVANNI

DEAR FRIENDS,

AS

I searched for a meaningful gift for my brother's seventy-fifth birthday, I came across this quote attributed to Fra Giovanni, which is framed in our San Francisco resource center and is a favorite of Traci's. What can we give our loved ones that truly reflects the depth of our love and concern for them? We wish to share this with you so that you may, in turn, share it with your loved ones.

As we researched the Fra Giovanni of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, we discovered the mystery of the quotation's elusive author. We feel the mystery of its authorship only adds to its allure. We hope you agree.

Peace and love,

KATE/TRACI

Fra

Giovanni Giocondo,
noted architect,
engineer, archeologist,
and theorist. Very little

is known for certain about his life and works. It is more certain that he constructed the Palazzo di Poggio Reale (Naples) and fortifications at Padua and Treviso and that he diverted the course of the Brenta River into the lagoons of Chioggia, in order to protect the city of Venice. His fame was such in his own day that in 1514 Leo X appointed him, together with Raphael and Antonio da Sangallo, to succeed Bramante as architect of St. Peter's. His humanistic activities include the discovery and publication of the *Letters* of Pliny the Younger and the publication of the *De prodigiis* of Julius Obsequens, the *Breviarium historiae Romanae* of Aurelius Victor and the *Commentaries* of Julius Ceasar. The British Museum stated in 1970 that it had *proved impossible* to identify Fra Giovanni, the purported author of this letter.

EXCERPT FROM THE NEW CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA (1967) AND
RESPECTFULLY QUOTED (1989)

*A letter to the Most Illustrious the Contessina
Allagia Dela Aldobrandeschi*

There is nothing I can give you
which you have not got; but there
is much, very much, that, while
I cannot give it, you can take. No
Heaven can come to us unless our hearts find
rest in it today. Take Heaven! No peace lies in
the future which is not hidden in this present
little instant. Take peace!

The gloom of the world is but a shadow.
Behind it, yet within our reach, is joy. There is
radiance and glory in the darkness, could we
but see; and to see, we have only to look.
Contessina I beseech you to look.

Life is so generous a giver, but we, judging its
gifts by their covering, cast them away as ugly
or heavy or hard. Remove the covering, and you
will find beneath it a living splendour, woven of

love, by wisdom, with power. Welcome it, grasp it, and you touch the Angel's hand that brings it to you. Everything we call a trial, a sorrow, or a duty: believe me, that angel's hand is there; the gift is there, and the wonder of an overshadowing Presence. Our joys, too: be not content with them as joys, they too conceal diviner gifts.

Life is so full of meaning and of purpose, so full of beauty—beneath its covering—that you will find that earth but cloaks your heaven. Courage, then to claim it: that is all! But courage you have; and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together, wending through unknown country, home.

And so, at this Christmas time, I greet you; not quite as the world sends greetings, but with profound esteem, and with the prayer that for you, now and forever, the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

FRA GIOVANI

CHRISTMAS EVE ANNO DOMINI 1513

*Death is not extinguishing the light;
it is putting out the lamp because
dawn has come.*

TAGORE

Dear Friends,

FORTY YEARS AGO,
when I was twenty-three, I had
the life-altering experience
of living in Bangladesh for two
weeks (then known as East
Pakistan). I was visiting a
friend in the Peace Corps
in the town of Barisal on
the mouth of the Ganges.
Although Barisal then had
a population of 200,000, it
could only be reached by boat
or plane, and there were no
hotels to be had.

I stayed instead with three
nuns of Madonna House, a
Canadian order founded by a
Russian who escaped from
the Revolution. I was deeply
impressed by these nuns,
who wore the traditional sari,
who had studied the language
and culture for two years, and
who, much to my amazement,
were teaching the Koran.
When I shared my astonish-

ment, they quipped, “You can’t make a good Christian out of a bad Moslem!”

“Besides,” they quickly added, “We are not here to convert, but to bear witness to God’s love.”

The nuns shared with me their love of the poetry of Tagore, the Bengali poet who is regarded as the Shakespeare of Indian literature, and who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. They even taught me one of his poems in Bengali, which, remarkably, I can still recite after forty years.

What made those two weeks so memorable was my total immersion in the lives of some of the world’s desperately poor. I remember lying in my little concrete hut, with the rain thundering on its tin roof, so much better off than the Bengalis in their grass huts with thatch roofs.

Peeking under the latched
shutters I watched, horrified,
as the cyclone's winds bent
the palm trees to the ground.
That night in Barisal five
hundred men, women and
children perished as their
grass huts were swept away
in the flood.

Forty years later, as I
searched for words which
might comfort the dying
and their loved ones, I was
inextricably drawn to the
poetry of that great mystic,
Tagore. I opened a little book
of his poetry to this poem,
which I knew I was meant to
find. Tagore, whose own life
was heavily immersed in
tragedy, reaches out to
comfort us.

May his words bring you
and your loved ones peace,

KATE STRASBURG

Who is
Rabindranath
Tagore?

*By Swami
Adiswarananda*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861—1941) is widely considered the greatest influence in modern Indian literature. In his native land of Bengal—which is known today as the country of Bangladesh—his influence is equal to that of Shakespeare throughout the English-speaking world. His songs are sung in elementary schools, and his poems and other writings are the subject of numerous theses and dissertations at the universities each year. Indians revere Tagore as an artist, sage, reformer, and spiritual leader; Tagore's work and life are the subject of frequent conferences and books that

deal with what his vision might mean for the future of India.

He made a significant contribution to education, expanding his father's small school into a university and instituting reforms that are in place to this day; created a new form of Indian musical composition; founded an important ashram; became a vital conduit of Indian culture to the Western world at a time when Britain and India were warring with each other; and, late in life, while exploring his own emergence as a visual artist, introduced modern and abstract painting to his people. Tagore was innovative in writing his poetry in the vernacular Bengali language rather than the traditional Sanskrit—thereby almost single-handedly creating what is now Bengali literature—and his poetry

evokes the flavor of the real Indian countryside, not the Anglicized India of the colonial period.

Tagore's influence has also been felt around the world. His books have been translated into numerous languages, and his verse speaks to people from all backgrounds who seek a deeper understanding of self, country, creation, God, and love. People have hungered for Tagore's wisdom; in the last two decades of the Soviet Union, in the 1970s and 1980s, more than a million copies of his books were sold in translation, despite (or perhaps because of) their obvious spiritual themes.

His vast literary output, the remarkable diversity of his talents, and his wide range of personal influence made him perhaps the most important bridge between the

spirituality of the East and the West in the first half of the twentieth century.

An accomplished poet, novelist, short story writer, painter, playwright, philosopher, and educator, Tagore first achieved fame in the West when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913.

Tagore's mystical approach to living was also fed by tremendous sorrow in his personal life. Over the space of only five years, in the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, Rabindranath's wife and two of his children, a boy and a girl, each thirteen years old, died. His three other children moved away from the family home; two daughters married and his other son went off to college in America. Tagore turned these tragedies and the resulting loneliness into great

depths of spiritual insight. He saw these happenings in a much broader context than his own life; his own life, in fact, had no boundaries. “He sought God not merely in the privacy of his soul,” writes one critic who worked with Tagore for several years, “but in every manifestation of [God’s] play in the outside world.” Sadness and gaiety, beauty and tragedy, all were held in the life of God among us, according to Tagore’s mystical perspective.

Excerpt from *Tagore: The Mystic Poets*
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INTO A LARGER
EXISTENCE

Peace, my heart, let the time
for the parting be sweet.

Let it not be a death but
completeness.

Let love melt into memory
and pain into songs.

Let the flight through the
sky end in the folding of the
wings over the nest.

Let the last touch of your
hands be gentle like the
flower of the night.

Stand still,
O Beautiful End,
for a moment,
and say your last words
in silence.

I bow to you and hold up
my lamp to light you on
your way.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE



I N T O

T H E


L I G H T



HEALING ENVIRONMENTS



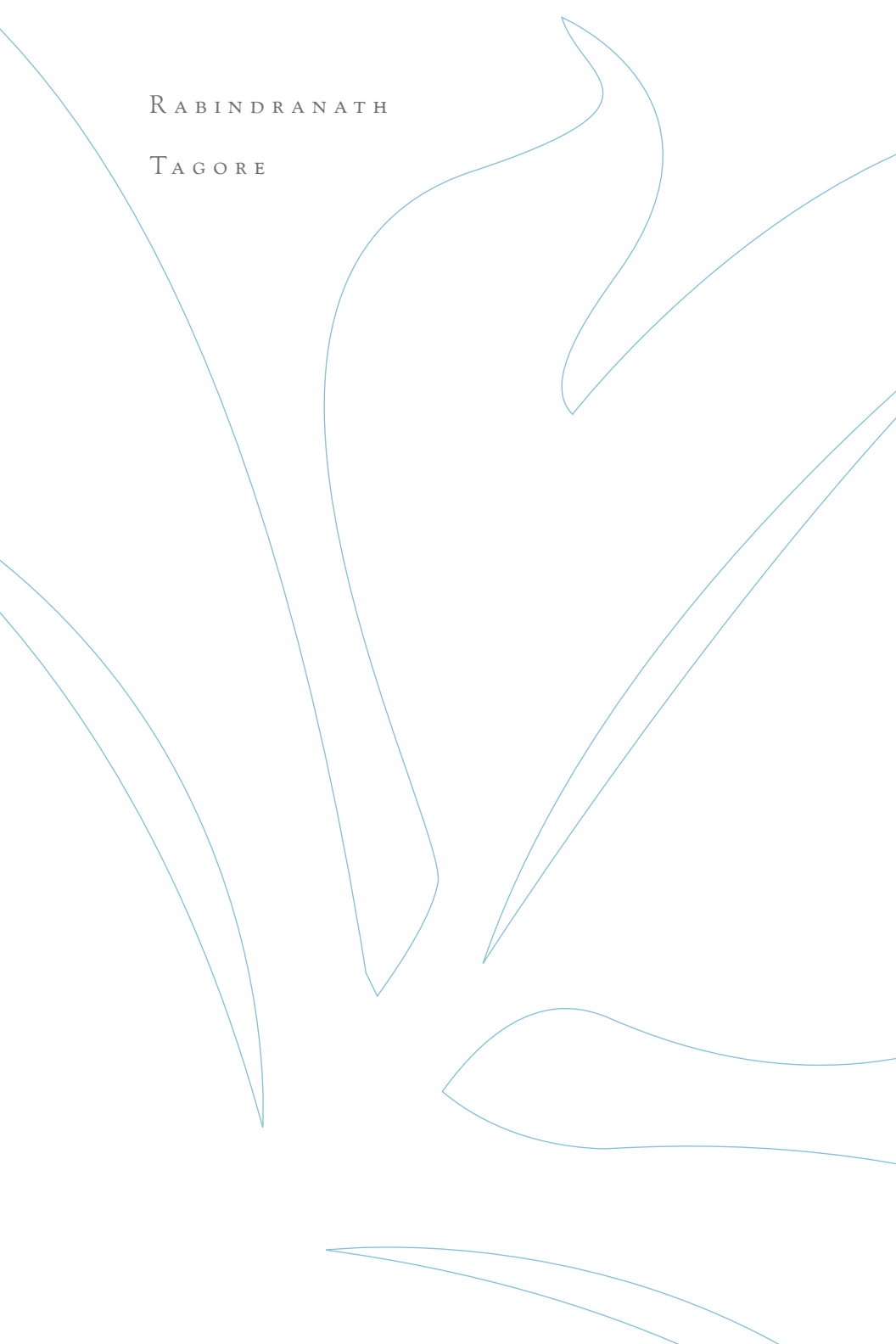


The background of the page is composed of several thin, light blue lines that form abstract, organic shapes. These lines curve and loop across the page, creating a sense of movement and depth. The shapes are reminiscent of stylized waves, flowing forms, or perhaps the outlines of faces and figures, though they remain abstract and incomplete. The overall effect is a minimalist and artistic design.

INTO A
LARGER
EXISTENCE

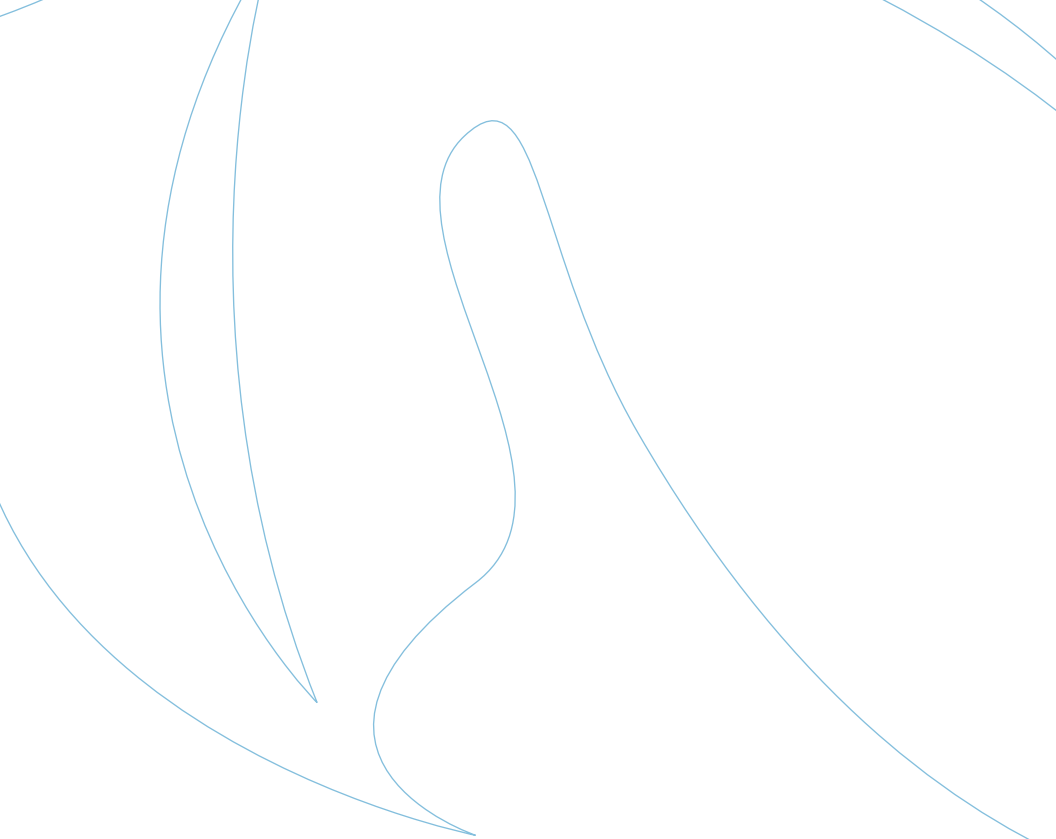
RABINDRANATH

TAGORE






PEACE,
MY HEART,



LET THE TIME

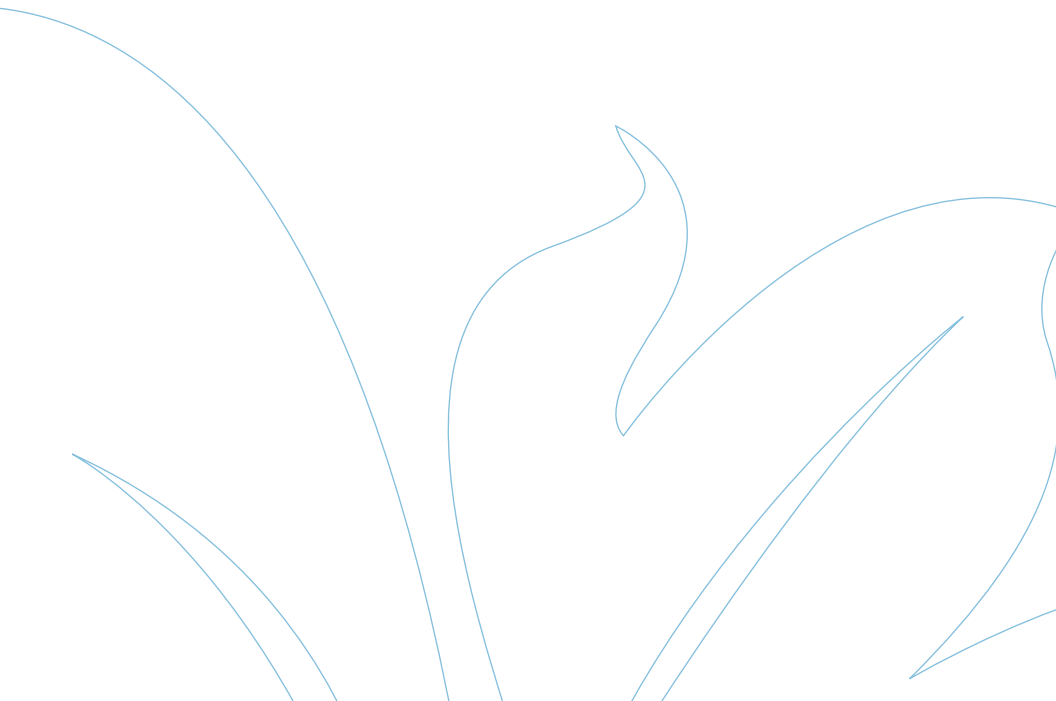
FOR THE PARTING


BE SWEET.

The page features several abstract, light blue line drawings. One large, sweeping curve starts from the top left and arcs towards the right. Another curve starts from the top right and arcs towards the left. A third curve starts from the middle right and arcs towards the left. A fourth curve starts from the bottom left and arcs towards the right. The text is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.

LET IT NOT
BE A DEATH BUT
COMPLETENESS.

LET LOVE MELT
INTO MEMORY AND
PAIN INTO SONG.

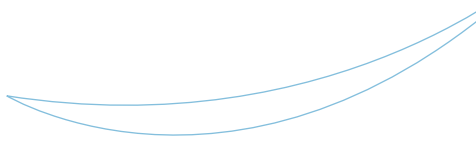
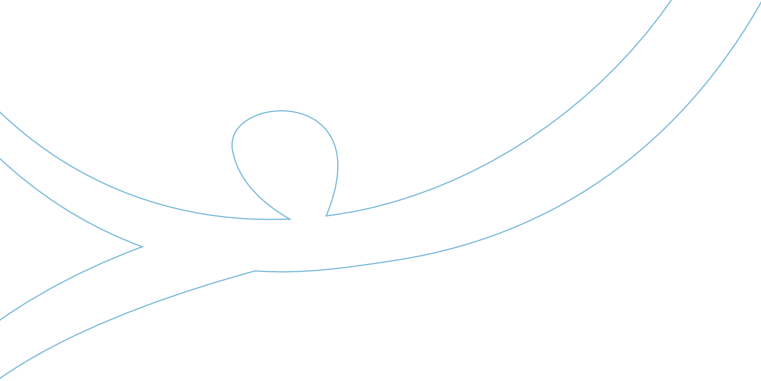




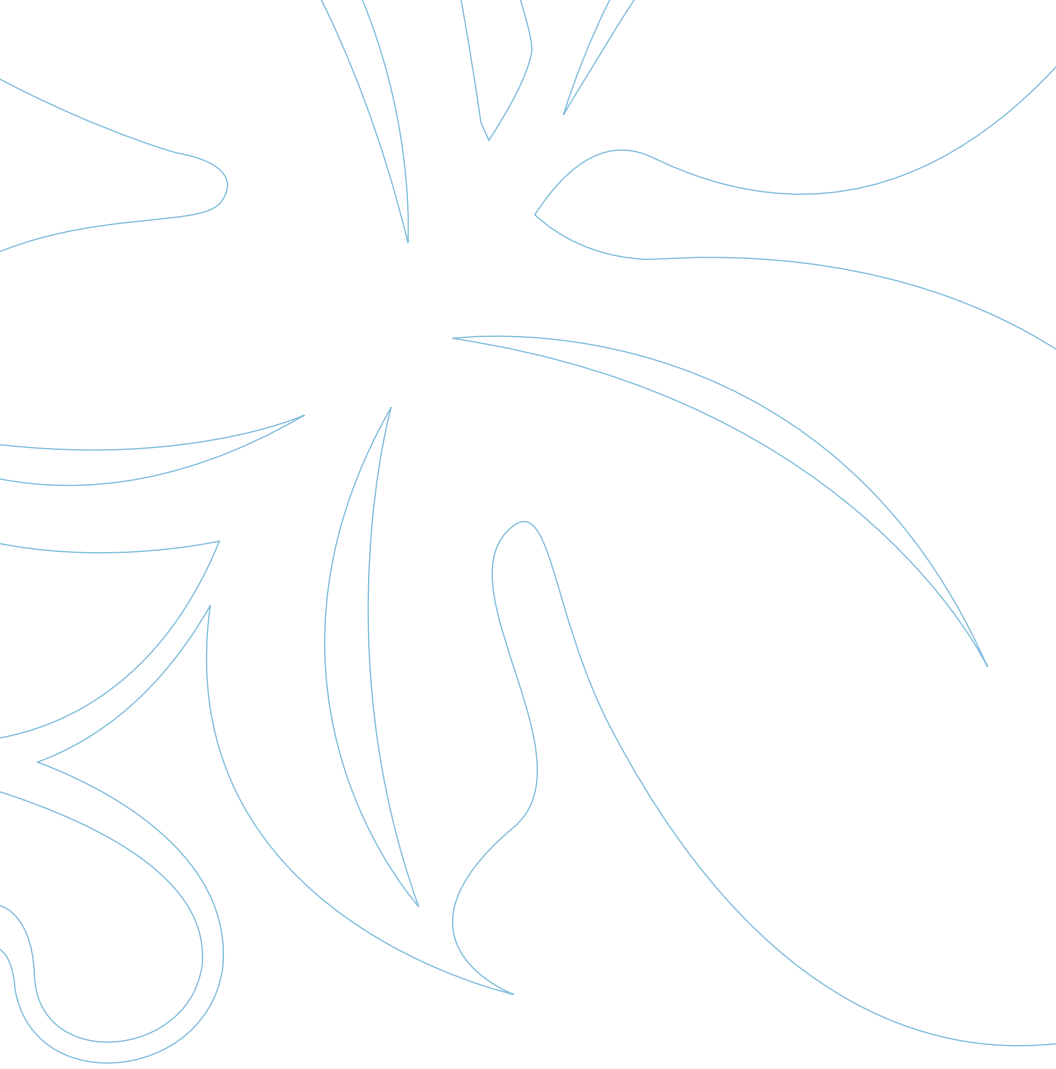
LET THE FLIGHT
THROUGH
THE SKY END



IN THE FOLDING
OF THE WINGS
OVER THE NEST.



LET THE
LAST TOUCH OF
YOUR HANDS



BE GENTLE LIKE

THE FLOWER OF

THE NIGHT.

The page features several abstract, light blue line drawings. On the left side, there are two large, flowing, curved lines that resemble stylized waves or calligraphic strokes. In the upper right quadrant, there is a smaller, more intricate line drawing that looks like a stylized, elongated shape with several curves and a pointed end. The overall aesthetic is minimalist and artistic.


STAND STILL,

The background of the page is a minimalist, abstract design composed of several thin, light blue lines. These lines form elongated, teardrop-like shapes that radiate from a central point, creating a sense of movement and organic form. The lines are smooth and continuous, with some ending in sharp points while others curve gently. The overall effect is that of a delicate, hand-drawn sketch or a modern, minimalist pattern.

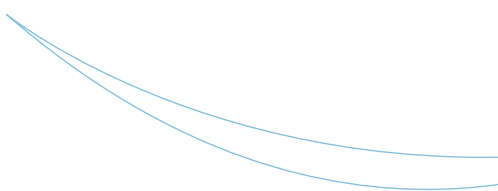
O BEAUTIFUL END,

The page features several thin, light blue lines that form abstract, flowing shapes. These lines are scattered across the page, with some entering from the left edge and others from the right. The lines are smooth and continuous, creating a sense of movement and fluidity. The overall composition is minimalist and elegant.

FOR A MOMENT,



AND SAY YOUR
LAST WORDS
IN SILENCE.





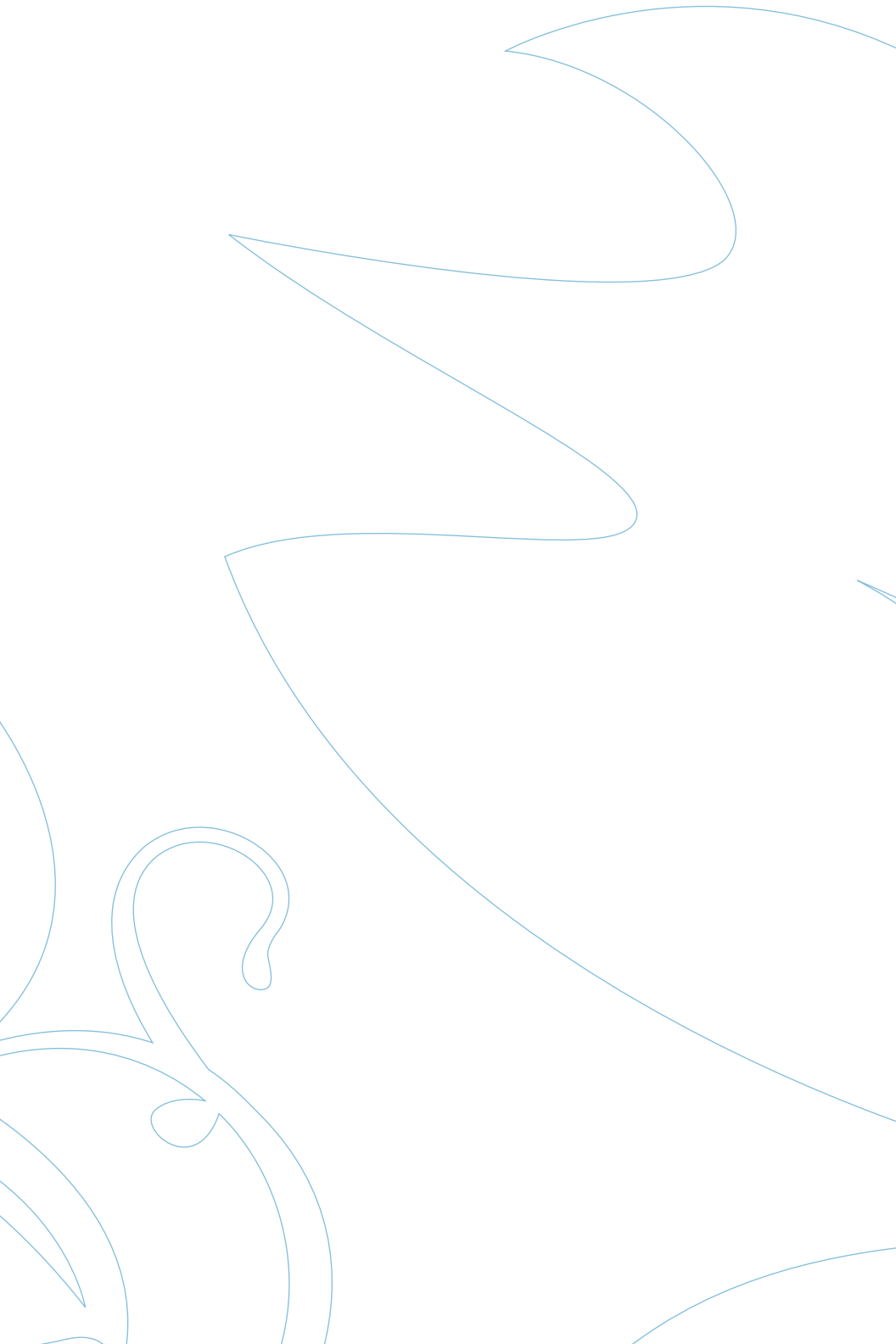
I BOW TO YOU

AND HOLD UP

MY LAMP

TO LIGHT
YOU ON
YOUR WAY.





The background of the page is filled with light blue, stylized outlines of various leaves and plant shapes. These outlines are scattered across the page, with some larger shapes in the upper and lower halves and smaller ones in between. The lines are thin and elegant, creating a sense of natural growth and movement.

TOGETHER WE WILL COMFORT THE SUFFERING

HEALING ENVIRONMENTS