

Inside Out

Holding the Child Within

Diaries from Drop+Kiss...+

NANA HINASE

*Edited and compiled by
Masaya Shikishima*

*With editorial supervision by
Hiroyuki Uchida, Ph.D.*

TIRM 2026 ENGLISH SAMPLE — NOT FOR SALE

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First published in Japanese in Japan on April 5, 2026.

This English-language material has been prepared exclusively as
a sample for TIRM 2026. It is not a published English edition
of the book.

The original Japanese edition is currently published by andnp
Corp. We are seeking publishing partners for translation and
publication in other languages.

If you are interested in this work, please visit our booth at
TIRM 2026. We would be delighted to speak with you.

Published by andnp Inc.
Tokyo, Japan
coral.andnp.com

Japanese edition ISBN 978-4-9913844-0-0 / 978-4-9913844-

1-7

NOTE ON THE TEXT

This volume presents selected excerpts from Drop+Kiss...+, a long-term diary project by Nana Hinase, originally written in Japanese. All diaries and poems included herein are her original writings. The entries reflect the author's perceptions, emotions, and states of mind at the time of writing. They are presented as contemporaneous records of lived experience, tracing psychological and inner developments, rather than as retrospective or objectively verified accounts of external events. Editorial intervention has been limited to what was necessary for publication. Professional consultation supported the preparation of this edition; however, responsibility for the edited text rests solely with the editor. Appropriate permissions have been obtained where required, and readers are respectfully asked not to attempt to identify individuals referenced in this work. Additional expert commentary is available on the publisher's official website.

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Regarding AI Usage

No generative AI was used in the conception, authorship, or editorial development of the original Japanese text. AI tools were used solely to assist in the preparation of the English translation.

FOREWORD BY HIROYUKI UCHIDA, PH.D.

I will begin by briefly explaining how I came to serve as editorial supervisor for this book. I am a clinical psychologist. I previously taught at a university, and now have a private practice in Gifu, Japan.

My connection to this book began when the editor came to my office after learning that I had been a friend of Counselor S. Regrettably, Counselor S had died of illness while he was still working with Nana. I spoke with the editor about Counselor S—what he was like as a person and his approach to counseling. I myself came to know something of Counselor S's work and read the manuscript with great interest. That was how I came to serve as editorial supervisor.

Several things struck me as I read this book. One was the way my friend Counselor S approached counseling, or psychotherapy. He seemed to be putting into practice what Donald Winnicott, the British psychotherapist he greatly admired, called "holding." Many counselors tend to guide or direct the process. Counselor S, however, paid close attention to Nana and spoke gently, as though quietly reaching out to her. He did not disrupt her pace. He responded to her as she was at each moment, without imposing on her, so that she herself could focus on looking into her own inner world.

With this holding from Counselor S, what Nana Hinase felt but could not yet name began to unfold in her diary. Being able to follow this process of psychotherapy was, for me, one of the valuable things I gained from reading this book. We are able to see this process today largely because the editor requested the disclosure of records from the hospital where Counselor S had worked, and because those records have been presented with appropriate ethical consideration.

A second major feature of this book is the inclusion of Nana Hinase's own diaries. Through these diary entries, set off from the surrounding text by a vertical rule, we are able to glimpse the movement of her inner life. She wrote the diary on a computer, and

AUTHOR

Nana Hinase is the author of *Drop+Kiss...+*, a twenty-year diary begun at the age of sixteen, tracing her life through psychotherapy, loss, love, and spiritual searching. The diary unfolds with the lyrical intensity of a single extended poem and forms the foundation of *Inside Out*. She was born in Mie, Japan, in 1988.

EDITOR AND COMPILER

Masaya Shikishima is the editor and compiler of *Inside Out*. Trained in physical chemistry, in which he earned a master's degree, he later broadened his studies to include philosophy, psychology, and religious thought. Following Nana Hinase's death, he undertook the long-term editorial work of shaping her twenty-year diary, poetry, and clinical records into this book.

EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR

Hiroyuki Uchida, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and Director of the Ginan Counseling Room. He has held academic positions at Osaka University and Tokai Gakuin University and specializes in clinical psychology and psychological assessment.

readers will notice that she often pressed the Return key repeatedly, leaving stretches of blank space on the page.

These blank spaces are not wasted space. In psychotherapy, therapists treat a client's silence with care. Dialogue in psychotherapy rarely proceeds smoothly throughout; silences arise. What a client says after such a silence—sometimes just a few words—can contain something that deserves close attention.

As Nana Hinase sat alone at her computer and recorded the movements of her mind, we can see how, through these silences, she looked inward and gradually found words. The blank spaces in the diary can be understood as serving a similar function. Rather than simply reading straight through the words, I hope readers will feel Nana's rhythm and take time with the way her words emerge. When words appear after several blank lines, I hope you will pause over them and feel their weight. Sometimes they are only a short phrase; at other times, a full sentence. I think these are moments when, as Nana faced her own inner world, she began to find meaning in things she had experienced in the past. Perhaps her inner work becomes easier to imagine if we think of the difficult-to-describe experience of tasting an unfamiliar dish for the first time. As you read, you will encounter expressions mingled with surprise, confusion, and hesitation—as if she were saying, “This happened in my own life, and yet I had never thought of it that way”—as well as a sense of freshness and relief when something finally became clear to her.

If you read the diary with the course of her psychotherapy in mind—from its early stages, through the period when she gradually began to see herself more clearly, and then to the point when she became clearly aware of both herself and her “inner child” and was able to face them—you may come to see Nana Hinase more fully. In some places, the blank spaces extend across several pages. If you read with attention to what stage Nana was in and what changes were taking place within her, I think those changes will become more apparent to you.

I sensed in these pages Nana's effort to somehow put into words new experiences arising through psychotherapy and her daily

life. Because she had never experienced them before, she often could not find words that seemed to express them well. Even so, she searched for words with which to record what she was experiencing. Perhaps ordinary language is simply too limited to translate Nana's delicate inner world into words. I hope you will take time with the process by which what could not be put into words gradually became words.

Facing one's inner child brings surprise, hesitation, and careful reflection. Little by little, the inner child grows.

Regrettably, Counselor S was unable to continue working with Nana until the end. If their psychotherapy had continued, and the two of them had been able to keep looking at these things together, she might have found words a little more easily. Even so, it comes through clearly that her inner child continued to grow, and that Nana herself grew along with it.

The path Nana Hinase walked after Counselor S's death must have been painful. Even so, we can follow how she continued an inner dialogue with the internalized presence of Counselor S, watched her inner child grow, and gradually enriched her own inner life.

It was almost as though Counselor S, seeing how difficult it was for Nana to take in both the world outside and the world within her, as well as the past, present, and future, began by offering her a very thin rice porridge, carefully considering what she could digest and absorb at that time. Nana recorded the “taste” of that porridge in her diary. Gradually, he offered her a somewhat thicker porridge, and again there was Nana's diary recording what it was like to take it in. I felt that their psychotherapy came to a close when Counselor S had seen Nana recover to the point where she could eat thicker porridge. Perhaps Counselor S himself would have wanted to see Nana reach the point where she could eat rice rather than porridge. I hope readers will not skip over the blank spaces, but will read the pauses themselves, slowly taking in the intervals. In doing so, I believe you may come to understand more deeply what Nana experienced inwardly.

I hope this valuable book will be read by those who have come to

face their own inner child, and by the family members, friends, and loved ones who walk alongside them.

The inner child is not, unfortunately, a child who grows quickly or easily. Yet those who continue to face their own inner child will, I believe, come to feel it growing little by little, steadily. I recommend this book to those who continue to live with their inner child in this way.

Inside Out

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Diaries from Drop+Kiss...+

NANA HINASE

*Edited and compiled by
Masaya Shikishima*

*With editorial supervision by
Hiroyuki Uchida, Ph.D.*

This book traces, on her behalf, a twenty-year journey in which Nana Hinase came to face the wounds of her childhood through psychological counseling.

A SECRET

*With one hand,
the world seems to hide a great secret from us,
while with the other,
it shows us the truth.*

*We,
by loving one another,
can see that truth.*

Even if we never come to know the secret,

to love is the answer—

*and we respond
with gratitude and prayer.*

*For a moment,
that was how it felt.*

Nana Hinase
February 2019

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Introduction

THE THEME OF THIS BOOK

The inner child is the sacred child within each of us¹. In contemporary usage, the term “inner child” often refers especially to the wounded child within. According to Jung, the child lives in the eternal here and now—it is our very sense of being alive.² If you ever lose sight of it, I hope you will pick up this book.

The inner child is the source of hope within us even when reason can find no grounds for hope. Life is not fair. We cannot avoid aging or illness, or the death of those we love—or our own. Even so, the inner child hopes innocently, even when it knows its hopes will not come true. It trusts others even when it knows it will be betrayed. Even though one day it will leave this world, it feels itself to be part of the world. It rejoices and grieves as one with the world, in innocence. At the same time, it is delicate, easily wounded, vulnerable, and frail. It is a sacred child that each of us must cherish and protect.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is the true story of one woman’s journey in search of her inner child, drawn from the diaries she kept over twenty years, beginning at the age of sixteen. I met her in my late teens and was with her until her death. Her name was Nana Hinase. Through illness and loss, she lost a part of herself and spent her life searching for love and for something beyond herself. After her death, I compiled the record of that journey into this book in her stead.

Hinase began keeping a diary titled Drop+Kiss...+³ at the age of sixteen. The writing eventually amounted to ten million Japanese characters—roughly the equivalent of one hundred books. The diaries leading up to her finding the inner child vividly record her journey through everyday events and what she felt at the time.

That journey can be described in many ways. Facing childhood trauma, dissociative identity disorder, and complex PTSD⁴ through psychotherapy can be seen as a psychological journey. Losing someone dear to her, while also encountering new people, can be seen as a journey through life. Or, in seeking something sacred in the depths of the heart—moving from separation toward integration, from loneliness toward gratitude, and from longing toward prayer—it can be seen as a spiritual journey.

INTENDED READERS

This book was written with three groups of readers in mind.

The first are those living with a wounded inner child⁵, as well as their families and partners. Hinase lost touch with her inner child in early childhood. Drop+Kiss...+ is a record of how she faced the inner child and eventually found it again. Because these entries were written day by day, without knowing what lay ahead, I hope they may offer something to those now making their way through days without answers.

The second are clinical professionals and researchers in child psychology. There is strong public interest in the inner child, dissociative identity disorder, and complex PTSD, and a great deal of research has been conducted in these areas. Yet a record written by the person herself over twenty years—and in such detail, amounting to ten million Japanese characters—is rare. In addition to her twenty years of diaries, this book also draws on hospital medical records obtained through disclosure requests. Together, these records run to more than seven hundred pages, documenting nearly every medical consultation and counseling session. They also contain many observations by physicians and clinical psychologists, some of which are excerpted as objective information.⁶

The third are spiritual seekers. The growth⁷ that can follow psychological trauma is known as post-traumatic growth (PTG)⁸, and this was also true for Hinase.

I met Hinase when I was eighteen and was with her until her death. What struck me as distinctive about her was that light and

darkness, love and anxiety, life and death did not so much blend together as exist each in its own right. The contrast was stark, like a canvas painted white on one side and black on the other. Perhaps this had something to do with dissociative identity disorder, which can involve disruptions in consciousness, memory, and identity. Perhaps dissociation had helped preserve the white part of her inner world, despite the severity of her childhood. She never forgot how to trust others or how to love. Yet the other side was painted pitch black, as though her soul itself had been divided. In darkness, she sought light. In anxiety, she sought love.

Over the course of that journey, she eventually received baptism in the Catholic Church. But I do not want this to be misunderstood. It was not a psychological escape, nor was it even a matter of believing in a doctrine. Rather, it was a journey of finding again, through her own efforts, the inner child she had once lost. It was an inside-out undertaking: through action, she gave outward form to a longing, deep within her heart, for something beyond herself. Had this journey moved from the outside inward—had it simply been a matter of passively accepting something—I would not have written this book. I write because she chose an inside-out way of living: listening to her inner feelings for the sake of what mattered to her, walking that path even when she knew it would be difficult, and giving outward form to what came from within. I believe this process itself is essential.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book is drawn from excerpts from Drop+Kiss...+ and is arranged so that readers can follow Hinase's twenty-year journey of facing her inner child while living with dissociative identity disorder, complex PTSD, and loss. It is divided into three parts, each centered on a theme:

Emotion Is the Language of the Soul

Facing Is an Act of Love

Perspective Shapes Perception; Perception Shapes Experience

The excerpts are presented largely in chronological order, but they are not a collection of isolated fragments. The book is structured so that, taken as a whole, Hinase's journey of facing her inner child forms a single, organic narrative.

Part One, *Emotion Is the Language of the Soul*, traces the nearly five years leading up to the point when Hinase, unable even to recognize that she herself was wounded, began to move forward by listening to her own emotions. During this period, she experienced a major loss, and that parting had a profound effect on her.

Part Two, *Facing Is an Act of Love*, depicts roughly five years in which she faced her own past—a past she had kept deep within her heart, covered over and tried not to see.

Part Three, *Perspective Shapes Perception; Perception Shapes Experience*, focuses on a spiritual journey. After losing someone she loved, and finding that her trauma could not easily be resolved, she did not seek simply to make it disappear. Instead, through a form of inner transformation, her perception changed, and with it, her experience itself was transformed.

Bringing her journey together in a single book was difficult. There was, of course, the simple limitation of trying to condense the equivalent of one hundred books into one. But there were two other reasons as well.

The first was that the events described in these excerpts did not exist independently of one another. Her journey was also present in the ordinary days that connected one event to the next, and I found it difficult to convey that by simply selecting individual diary entries. Where necessary, I therefore added brief passages between entries, drawing on my own memories, her medical records, and the diary entries before and after them.

The second reason concerns the nature of a diary itself. Even when an entry is written on the same day, it is still a record made after the experience, rather than a description written from within the feeling of the moment itself. For that reason, I have also included poems she wrote around the time of the diary entries, setting them apart from the entries themselves. In the poems, what she felt at

those moments is expressed from an inward perspective. Although this book is based on actual records, you may also read it, if you wish, as a collection of poems.

Each entry in *Drop+Kiss...+* was written for that particular day. She did not later add to or delete from those entries. In compiling this book, I have respected that practice. Apart from correcting a small number of typographical errors and omissions, I have made as few changes as possible. Repeated punctuation, line breaks, and the spaces they create were all intentional. In editing the material, passages have sometimes been omitted or reordered to fit the surrounding context, but nothing new has been added to or invented within her writings.

A FAIRY'S WHISPER

Before entering the main body of this book, I would like to begin by looking at the world as though it were a fairy tale. She wrote the following about a world where anxiety seems to outweigh love, and darkness is easier to see than light—as though gently speaking to a child before sleep.

A Midday Star, February 2016

*Fear, you see... everyone carries it.
God gives it to each of us,
as something of our own.*

So... there is no one without fear.

Darkness, you see... everyone carries that too.

*And love...
everyone carries love, too.*

*God tells us
not only to receive it,
but to be the ones who give it.*

*Because when we do,
the world fills with love.*

*And death...
death comes to everyone.*

*Sooner or later, we all die.
That is how God made this world.*

"Hey..."

"So..."

what's sacred?"

"Well..."

*it's something everyone has
from the day they're born.*

*We have to help it shine brighter,
so that we can show it to God."*

*"All right, it's getting late.
Time for bed."*

"Okay..."

Part 01

Emotion
is the language
of the soul

Chapter One

Fragmented Emotions and the Soul's Other Half

The Language of the Soul

THE BEGINNING OF THE DIARY

The highest truths lie hidden in our deepest emotions. From the depths of the heart, they speak to us without ceasing.⁹ Hinase began keeping a diary at sixteen in response to a call from those deepest emotions. For many people, following such a call is no easy path. It is, rather, a difficult one. This was true for her as well. She had made up her mind about something when she began her diary at sixteen. Years later, she recalled that time:

February 27, 2016 (Saturday)
A Midday Star

Shortly after I started high school, I made a decision.

“To be honest with myself.”

That was when I began writing this diary. And almost immediately, I felt overtaken by anxiety, fear, and loneliness. People say adolescence is about falling in love, but before I could even think about liking or disliking someone, I didn't know whether it was

okay for me to be here at all.

Somewhere along the way, I began cutting myself. I forgot everything—how it hurt, why I did it.

I must have been reset...

A soul that had once died

began to breathe,

trying once more to live inside this body.

There is a clear reason why I continue to write this diary. I'm trying, simply, to stay true to myself. If I don't write, the days will surely eat away at the years. I had been living in a world where it was enough for time simply to pass... and I wanted to stop that... probably.... So just writing is already part of trying to be true to myself.

And there must be nothing false or impure in what I write. That's a rule I set for myself. There are several rules... and I have to meet all of them... But there are so many things I could write that I have to narrow them down. I'm not very good at narrowing things down. That's just how my diary is. Still, even so, I am narrowing them. In ways you can't see.

In my everyday life, how honest am I really able to be?

I feel as though how true I can stay is somehow the measure by which God might choose me. Not God in some grand sense... more like a sincere parent who quietly helps me stay true... some-

thing like that. A parent, after all... everyone has one. It's not really about religion. I feel like there's probably something like God inside us... and maybe we can choose how we reach it.

For as long as I can remember... a feeling that has never really left me.

FIRST VISIT

"I can't stop cutting myself." It was in 2004, during her second year of high school, that her parents took her to the psychiatry department at O Hospital for the first time. She looked anxious. A nearby mental health clinic, which treated relatively mild problems such as sleep disturbances and anxiety, had referred her to O Hospital, a major regional hospital. At the doctor's direction, she began psychological counseling. There she met Counselor S, who would support her for the next fourteen years.

Counselor S was a clinical psychologist in his early forties, dressed in a white coat, with a slender build and a refined appearance. After graduating from university, he¹⁰ had built his career at a child guidance center in neighboring Y City before taking a full-time position at O Hospital several years earlier. His specialization in child psychology would prove fortunate for her.

What could be more encouraging than having someone take a genuine interest in you? Her home life had been controlling and intrusive over small matters, yet neglectful and indifferent when she needed someone to rely on. Having grown up feeling constrained but unable to depend on anyone, she must have approached counseling with a hopeful anticipation she could hardly contain. With the hope that someone might finally understand her, and the fear that she might be betrayed again, she wrote about herself in a notebook and brought it to her first counseling session. Counselor S recorded the following in her medical chart:

She brought a notebook containing an account of the bullying

she had experienced in junior high school.

She read aloud about these distressing experiences in a flat, matter-of-fact manner, without outwardly showing emotion. Within her circle of friends, Pt (editor's note: patient) refers to herself as "Nana" and to her parents as "Papa" and "Mama," using forms of address different from those she uses in daily life. This can be understood positively as an attempt to create a new self, but it may also be read as a denial of reality.

I interpreted her self-cutting, while she continued to dismiss the bullying as probably just her imagination, as perhaps a way of confirming that she was a living, flesh-and-blood human being. It may be her own way of resisting being treated like a "thing," as though she had no feelings of her own.

I also told her that her matter-of-fact manner of speaking might reflect a chronic suppression of emotion, to the point that she was no longer able to identify what she truly felt.

In elementary school, she was ignored and bullied. In junior high school, people talked about her behind her back, and her homeroom teacher turned a blind eye. After suppressing more shame and sorrow than she could bear, she reached high school and made a decision: to stop simply waiting for time to pass and instead be honest with herself. It was then that she met Counselor S. At O Hospital, a physician diagnosed her with PTSD stemming from childhood and dissociative identity disorder associated with it, and she began psychological counseling. It marked the beginning of a journey in which she would seek light in the darkness—having lost her sense of self through dissociation and living with emptiness, a sense of nothingness, and depression.

SILENCE AS CONVERSATION

Would she be understood? Or would she be betrayed once again? Caught between these opposing thoughts, the girl read her account of those painful experiences aloud in a flat, matter-of-fact voice. Ten years later, she reflected on how she had come to build rapport—a relationship of trust—with Counselor S.

June 1, 2014 (Sunday)

Silence

To others, I seemed like a quiet, withdrawn child, always looking down, always giving off a gloomy vibe. That's how I was seen, and my parents saw me that way too. But inside, I think I was a child who would be moved by all sorts of things, crying easily, full of intense emotions. I don't think any of that was visible from the outside.

In my counseling sessions with Counselor S, it wasn't like I could talk about anything the way I do now. At the beginning, of course, I didn't even know what to talk about... and it was nothing but silence. So much silence.

But at times like that, he didn't say things like "How have you been lately?" or "Are you feeling anxious?" He just stayed with me in the silence. It wasn't just nervousness, or awkwardness from not being used to counseling... I think I was having a conversation in silence... No, that doesn't sound right... what am I even saying...

It was more like... somehow, while staying silent, we were communicating intensely.

I think I was scared—maybe about whether I could trust him, or not. I kept thinking about whether it was really okay to hand my heart over to him. I had never had the experience of someone like that appearing in front of me. It might have been the first time I had ever thought about whether I could entrust my heart to someone at all. ...Well, maybe I tried to do that with my

parents too—but at some point, I must have given up. So part of me kept telling myself that this was just his job. ...Why am I crying? I don't know... the tears just keep coming, and I don't even know why...

Sitting there in silence, maybe somewhere inside I felt a kind of relief—a sense that I was allowed to remain silent. I had never communicated like that with my parents. I was never really treated as a child.

Grandma kept telling us sisters that we were all no good. I was made to listen to my mother's complaints all the time, and my father would hit me (I don't remember it very clearly). My mother was always sighing. I was always moving as if pushed along by those sighs. She kept saying how hard everything was, how hard life was. And I felt every day that living itself was this hard. I never had any friends. I was bullied at school... and I was silent the whole time.

So I was silent in front of Counselor S too... and after a while, it began to seem that he might be someone who would stay with me in that silence... and then I suppose I started thinking about whether I could entrust my heart to him—whether it might be all right to speak honestly.

The Soul's Other Half

THE HARDSHIP AND SORROW OF LIFE

Life is difficult. Unfair things happen, and aging comes to us all. We fall ill. Our own death is unavoidable. We lose those we love. Yet these events themselves do not determine our happiness or unhappiness. Rather, life is the very process of facing them. The problem, it seems, arises when for some reason that process is obstructed—when we become trapped, physically and

psychologically, by painful experiences and can no longer find direction or meaning. One of the clearest examples of this is the condition known as dissociative identity disorder.

DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER

In medical terms¹¹, dissociation refers to a disruption or discontinuity in the normal integration of memory, perception, identity, consciousness, and related functions. Put simply, it is a loss of the ability to bring together aspects of consciousness, memory, and experience.

Dissociation itself can also occur in healthy people. If you have ever been doing a repetitive task while thinking about something else, only to realize that the task is already finished, that too can be understood as a dissociative experience. The intensely focused state athletes sometimes describe as “being in the zone” is another example. Dissociation can also arise as a psychological defense in life-threatening situations such as serious accidents or disasters. In the face of tragedy, emotions such as sadness or shock may become numbed, allowing a person to respond with an almost surprising calm. Later, memories of the event may feel hazy, or the experience itself may not feel fully real. Temporarily separating from one's emotional response in the moment can be an appropriate acute stress reaction. In this sense, dissociation itself is one of the mind's normal functions.

But when dissociation is not temporary and instead recurs in everyday life—especially when it is triggered by psychological stress in early childhood—it can develop into disorders involving the integration of the self, such as dissociative identity disorder or depersonalization. Hinase describes below how she had used and controlled dissociation in everyday life since early childhood.

February 11, 2020 (Tuesday)

Dissociation

Late in the morning there was a dull, unpleasant feeling—some-

thing like drowsiness, something like heaviness. I thought maybe lying down would make it easier, so I stretched out and closed my eyes, and then suddenly I realized—this is dissociation.

A light, floating comfort spread through me, and the sensations in my body grew distant... Even after I got up and did a little housework, it didn't change...

I never ended up sleeping.

And then small memories from when I was little began to surface.

Among them was the day I fell asleep on my mom's bed that evening.

Thinking about it now, I could feel clearly that long before I knew it for what it was, I had been controlling this dissociation and using it.

Even now, I can't control it freely, but there are times when I use it. It's just that today—now—is the first time I've noticed that.

Sometimes it just happens. Sometimes it happens without me being able to control it. Sometimes I can bring it on. And sometimes I can't. It's something like that.

Last night, too, I used it because it felt like I wouldn't be able to fall asleep. This is how I've tried to make my days more comfortable, using dissociation in everyday life. And sometimes, because of that—maybe—I have nightmares. ...I don't know if it's really in exchange for it, but somehow... it feels like a punishment.

Back in high school, when my illness had clearly begun to manifest, if my father was yelling at home, I would be crying, while my awareness drifted far away, and I would vaguely watch myself

curled up on the bed from near the wall. And when my consciousness slowly began to return, I would have already forgotten that I had been crying.

At times, being at home became unbearable, and with nowhere else to go... I would sit in my room, absent-minded, letting all the ways of letting go of awareness run through my head... and then, at last, when I found the key, I would feel soft and floating... ... and I would feel like I didn't want to come back.

Usually it lasts around twenty minutes to a couple of hours, I guess.

A long time ago, there was a time when I was wrapped up in bed, dissociating and crying, and because I stayed shut in my room for so long, my mother suddenly came in and told me to hurry up and get out. She was angry, telling me to hurry up and take a bath. I answered, but maybe it sounded halfhearted, because she became even more angry... "Nana, what do you want to do, shutting yourself up in your room like that? What do you want your mother to do?!" ...

I don't remember what came after that, but I must have gone and taken a bath quickly.

There was a time when Counselor S pointed it out to me—"That's dissociation." Thinking about it now, I really feel that I didn't properly understand it then. Back then, I felt like I really understood it... and yet, when I think about how even now I sometimes use it on my own, so ordinarily, I just find myself thinking that people are kind of incredible—in a very ordinary way. Yeah.

Things like a nurse with a gentle tone of voice, or someone speaking broken Japanese... or the strange way people talk on TV, the kind where they say the voice has been changed... When it happens on its own, it's usually with things like that. That's all I know.

IMAGINARY COMPANION

Some people may remember having an imaginary friend when they were young. An imaginary companion is a figure who exists within a person's imagination—someone they may talk with internally, or even picture as though present before them and play with. It is a relatively common experience in childhood and can be understood as a form of dissociation.

Imaginary companions generally disappear as children grow older, though in rare cases they remain into adulthood. Hinase had long been troubled by unexplained feelings of emptiness, meaninglessness, and depression. In her inner world stood a five-year-old girl who always seemed to be waiting for someone. One day, Hinase spoke about her in counseling with Counselor S.

February 2, 2008 (Saturday)

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It's not really something to explain now, but... lately I've been thinking that maybe I should tell someone.

But I don't know who. I thought about bringing it up in counseling, but... I didn't know what to say, and... um... ah... there's this... five-year-old... girl...(I thought he might ask, "Where?" but the counselor stayed silent, like he always does.)

I... know three things about this girl.

"She's about five years old."

"She was abandoned by her parents when she was two or three."

"She's always very lonely."

...Those three.

I don't know this girl. Just these three things. I don't even know her name. But the last one... "very lonely"... it's not something I think about. It isn't in my head. It's more like I know it by feeling. Or maybe not know—feel. She's there. This girl... she's there. I feel her. She's always there. Since I was little. She's often there... I encounter her... I don't know how to put it. But she isn't me. My parents are my parents in real life. This girl isn't me. And yet she's always there. With me. And when I think about how lonely she must be, the tears keep coming, and I can't sleep at all.

"How have you made sense of this child being there?"

"Have you ever thought you might be strange?"

"No. Not at all. There's nothing strange about it—she's always been there. I'm not strange."

"...Do you know the term 'imaginary companion'?"

"Wha... what is that? Imagi... what?"

"Haven't you heard it before...?"

He looked around for a piece of paper, then took out his business card. On the back, using the fountain pen he always used to write in his charts, he wrote:

Imaginary = imagined

Companion = friend, companion

"Imaginary companions are something many children have. Some people say most children do. In a bad way, they can be like Doraemon for Nobita—a convenient presence. Sometimes they hold memories too painful for the child to keep inside, almost as if someone else had experienced them... Sometimes they carry the child's painful emotions... Sometimes they fill in something that feels missing... And for some people, they remain even after childhood..."

The little girl who stood quietly in Hinase's inner world always seemed lonely. She was always alone, waiting for someone to come. She had been there since Hinase's early childhood, waiting for someone to care about her, to speak to her, to crouch down and take her hand.

Counselor S began to speak, gently but clearly.

March 29, 2013 (Friday)

The Keeper of Memories

"Maybe... that child is carrying your traumatic memories..."

It was the kind of thing that made me doubt my own ears.
"What?" I kept saying.

"Wait—come on, sensei. I'm being serious. I'm perfectly sane, you know."

"Of course I know! I would never think you weren't."

"But... haven't I been strange since earlier? Don't you think I might be losing it? I'm just... too strange... maybe I've become strange... It's not like that child is a separate personality or anything... she's just... there. Just... there..."

"When you first came to see me—back when you were in high school, in those very early days—there's something you said that left a strong impression on me. You said, 'I'm really spoiled. I cut myself. I'm the worst. Everything bad is my fault.' I remember being genuinely shocked. In what way were you spoiled? I even worried that at any moment you might actually complete it—not just attempt it. Your early childhood has been completely sealed off inside you—covered over, so thoroughly. I can only assume

the memories there must be very deep and painful. Some people who have experienced abuse simply say, 'Abuse is wrong. It's terrible. It's the worst,' and leave it at that. But you're different... somehow... I could never see you as someone who had been overly indulged by your parents. And yet... I found myself wondering why it had been sealed off so completely."

"...That child is very small."

"Some memories are simply too painful for one person to bear. So they are divided—shared, in a sense, between you and that child. Your painful memories may be carried by that child, and you may have forgotten them... or rather, maybe you aren't able to carry them yourself."