

A close-up photograph of a small, vibrant yellow flower with a dark stem and green leaves, growing out of a crack in a grey concrete sidewalk. The background is blurred, showing more of the sidewalk and some greenery. Two white diagonal lines are overlaid on the image: one in the upper right and one in the lower left.

*HOPE IS
IRRESISTIBLE*

Where the sorrow
subsides.

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I found you deep in my stomach, swirling in a sea of cosmic cells.

Hope, the seed from the fruit of life.

(HALF)EMPTY/FULL

A Wounded heart, dying in decompression.

A heart that beats, formed by the cells of God.

This loneliness covers me like a crypt.

A quiet sanctuary for the seeker of stillness.

Blood on my hands and guilt through my bones.

A lesson learned in the guise of judgmental tones.

Tears run like a river of lost moments, damming me into distress.

Tears that rip and free the waves of elation, washing all over me.

Death.

Life.

A bitter end to a dying wounded bird.

Who soared higher than all the others in the sky.

BEAT THE DRUM

Sitting on the edge, of a dream within a dream.

Tangles my mind like cobwebs.

Strings my heart to the moon.

Walk with me a while.

Dehydrate the sorrow away.

As we move closer to the sun.

Touch my fingertips where tiny dragons dance.

Careful like sweet kisses upon the one you love.

Softly, but holding back such passion.

Crawl inside and count the stars.

Each beat of this heart is for you.

RELISH

I still have the taste of you on my lips.

Consumed in passion.

Chapped in reason.

Digesting the sorrow for a day.

As the bones of us melt in my stomach.

And we start the dance once again.

OFFER

Inside my hands, gold and diamonds sparkle.

Their shine fades in your eyes.

Reduced to lead and coal.

Out of my tongue sweet words trickle.

Caught up with cotton candy sincerity.

Such bitter tastes to your ears.

I offer my heart, the most valued treasure.

And all you see is an organ of despair.

Sounding such sombre music.

With its dying rasps.

Yet still you owe me nothing in return.

SPANK

Roll me around your tongue like a toffee.

Kiss me quick.

Suck me like coffee.

Nothing out there looks the same.

All you need do is call my name.

Put me on. Twist the cap.

Make me shiver, take it back.

Black out the sky, turn me upside down.

Pull me in, then make me frown.

One little shake before you me kill me.

All the stars you send to thrill me.

Strip it off, lay it out.

Grab a hold and make me shout.

FLUORESCENT FUTURE

4am as the world whispers me awake.

All is calm, and the night travels in my veins still.

I slept the day away.

Rubbing the tiredness and memories from my eyes.

Half a world away, yet right where I started.

Right where I belong.

The veil is yet to be lifted from my shaded stay.

Talking to me still from the past in a language I slightly recognise.

Talks of entangled vines and harkening songs.

The red land beneath my feet.

Sticking to me like sand on wet skin.

Rub away these English oaks. This chitter of festivity.

Don't lead me blind with your patriotic stories.

Colour me sunlit gold and let me sleep.

Crying into the night.

Drifting away on the tide.

AUSPICES

Candied apple smiles that dapple this heart.

Pulling the pieces back from the deep lagoon.

Resetting them like a Picasso in reverse.

Hope is irresistible, dancing on my fingertips like butterflies.

After years suffering those gloomy caterpillars.

Fresh Arctic water rushes my soul.

Cleansing all that had rotten within.

Funnel down this love into me, fill me up with the golden light.

Can you see the truth in this statement?

A tinnitus ting-sha in my eyes as I consult the i-Ching.

This heartache is wavering.

Threatening to collapse while strength begins to blossom in the cracks.

Cotton candy turns over this dusty broken soul.

Lighting tiny lamps in my heart for love to follow.

STICKY

Soft words like snow in my ear.

Slither into my soul.

Fill me up like honey.

Hold me like a precious treasure.

Keep me safe.

Scrub away those unloves.

The scabs of hurt that taste so bitter.

Count my eyelashes in time to my heartbeat.

Wait for it to skip.

Count me down.

Preserved now forever in your tarred soul.

Stuck like chewing gum to the underside of your heart.

CORROSIVE

Great opportunity.

Swim to me like you're in an aquarium.

Smell this sweet delirium.

Candy tongued and sarcastic.

This mountain flower pick-able state.

Didn't you notice?

My store front vulnerability.

Flashing neon signs: 'Kiss me'.

Corrosively dipped and iron willed.

All in disguise.

Like cyanide sweet nothings on your pillow, talk, and swallow me down.

Wash away those ugly thoughts and humiliation.

Rain. Rain. Rain. (Back again?) This smells like tomorrow.

HOW A DREAM LOOKS

This dream will always elude me.

Fly from my hands like a thousand whispering ghosts.

Like catching sunlight in jars, spinning gold from your tongue.

All simple thoughts defeat me.

Reduced to shivers and sighs.

I'm awash with thoughts of you.

Your body moving on this earth, somewhere; but never here.

To collect the lights in your eyes, to drink your tears.

To slip inside your soul and coil up in your cells.

This is what dreams are for.

Beat the dream, bang the drum.

Mould the life I grip to and yet yearn to wash away.

I drift into our future, rooted in the past.

My elephant graveyard of memories quivers.

Terraformed into something pleasant; something conquered by you.

I cast my sorrow into the sun, allowing it to evaporate.

And drink from the pools of this planet. Sleep in the shade of your low hanging leaves and dream the tales of yet to be.

HURRIED HOME

This galaxy that divides us, keeping me from you.

Like a tooth wrapped in twigs, eager to seize you once more.

Distance and time stopping my heart like lidocaine.

Pulsating in a static fury.

Tragedy beyond my grasp.

So, I travel, I move towards you.

Travelling such light years and eye blinks.

Coming home to you.

Burning the bridge behind so I need never dwell beneath.

Banishing the trolls from my skin.

Wiping away magic that bound me there.

I see you standing, silhouetted against my soul.

Arms and heart open. Promising such comfort.

Ready to envelop me into your world.

I cast no shadow in your light, for we are one.

Keeping me safe in the house of marble, with pillars of time.

I feel your skin and pluck the bones from your heart.

Building me a home like a nesting bird.

Erasing the pain and migratory thoughts.

Staying with you till the end of time.

ZEPHYR THROUGH MY SOUL

Eyes stutter as bones collapse, black ink escapes me.

I sky dive in colours, shaking these sins off my back.

Feeling the warmth from within, as the light enters my skull.

Flow.

Dropping down into the ocean, where I swim to the iridescent floor.

Swallowing topaz and truths, shining in the deep.

The world tips over and I take root, strands around me taking me up to the light.

Shooting comets across my eyes.

Trying to remember where it began.

Climbing higher this tree of life, offering my hand to you, to meet me on its branches.

Like the sweet smell of the rain, I sense your nearness.

Wrapped in the roots that bind us and strengthen our resolve.

The incense of the Garden of Eden drowns you, calling us higher.

Smouldering in my soul.

Shaking off the earthen soil of the selfish.

The tangle that bound me before, I cut away with Isaac's blade.

Sharp and ready, made from glass.

Cutting the vines that grew so ferociously within me.

Rooting my soul here with you once more.

Lifting me to freedom.

SWEETNESS FOLLOWS

Jasmine lips and honey eyes.

Dance on my flesh like miniature dragonflies.

Growing roses in my heart.

The ivy of my mind to twist into.

Licking your skin and tasting the ocean.

Chasing your wave and finding sand in my shoe.

You.

Blue and free like the sky that pulls over my eyelids.

Whispering into my skull, the tantric movement of tomorrow.

Taking me off to another land.

Where your skeleton slips into my skin each day.

And crystal tears carve a path right through me.

Amber shivers and slumbered eyes, welcoming these dreams.

Tiptoeing through the water lilies of your world.

Hovering like the hummingbird of your heart.

Beat and hum.

RADIANCE

Waking up again, with feathers in my mouth.

Gold dust on my hands.

You in my eyes.

Letting you sleep, to dream; though of what, I do not dare to ask.

I shake the starlight from my eyelids, push my earthly bones up.

Breaking the day and the silence.

A smile from you cracks the egg of happiness within me.

Sliding through my blood.

A behaviour that is hard to understand.

In a breath you are there, next to me.

A kiss that makes me know there is a God.

I quiet the neural oscillation; such rhythm leaves me weak.

Leaves me wanting.

Picking up the pieces one by one.

The puzzle finished and making sense.

Unified in starry manifestations. A brightness that intensifies.

To pure radiance.

Bringing me back home.

ELLE VA BIEN

They jostled onto the train that had arrived with a clanking commotion at the station. The vaulted tiled ceiling of the underground swirled with the sound of metal, tannoy announcements and tourist hubbub. The train had emptied somewhat, spilling out its human cargo which shuffled towards the luminous *sortie* signs, the basic words even foreigners understood. Ingrained from childhood French lessons and the trappings of travel. They were able to get seats as the train pulled away and snaked into the belly of the city, passing tunnels and bones of the long forgotten.

The seats were as hard as wood, worn down from millions of asses thankful for somewhere to rest on the short journeys between stations. They were heading down towards Saint-Marcel and thankful too to be getting away from the crush and pull of the touristy hotspots. They watched the other passengers engrossed in smart phones, conversations and anxieties of potentially going the wrong direction. Passengers on life's train of happenstance.

Opposite them sat a lady, listening to her headphones and glancing off into the train. Looking, but searching for nothing. Her brown hair fell around her face, framing her like a motionless portrait typical of those seen metres above in the many museums dotting the city. She sat still, listening to her music as the train swayed and hummed down the line. The only movement was a collection of tears that suddenly began to build and breach, trickling down her face. They watched as she tilted her head down, blinking away the tears and emotions that had appeared. One of them jabbed the other in the side, bringing attention to the scene before them in case it was not being seen or felt for the degree that it was. He reached inside his pocket and took out a tissue, hoping it was clean. The crinkles indicated it had been with him all day but it looked devoid of anything unpleasant.

He reached across and gently touched her arm. She looked up, surprised. "Are you okay?" he asked, hoping his eyes spoke to a level beyond the language required. She nodded and mumbled words of appreciation, taking the tissue and dabbing her eyes. A small smile appeared at the corner of her mouth, her eyes shaking away an embarrassment that wasn't necessary.

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She looked above her, finding the line map. A tiny yellow light indicated they were at Bastille. The train usually emptied a lot here and she glanced around, seeing those exiting and the ones awaiting to board. Her hand found the phone in her pocket and she skipped the track on her music. Her mind was suddenly taken elsewhere as her heart skipped and beat, and the chaos around her ebbed away. It had never been their song, but it was always one that reminded her of them. The lyrics so seemingly fitting for what they had, what had burrowed inside of her and warmed her soul. She did not notice the two guys sit down opposite her, the limited space between them where their knees nearly met. She was off elsewhere, hearing laughter and smelling them on her bedsheets.

The train jerked, and though she stayed in her memory, it shifted along with the train. It had all crumbled, corroded only yesterday. Smashed like a teetering teacup on the edge of a kitchen counter. She could

understand things not working right now, she could even acknowledge the arguing. But those had been usual relationship problems. To be told she was no longer needed, that she was no longer welcome in their life. That was what had hurt. She could deal with the packing up of possessions and the moving on. Going into work the next day as routine propelled her forward. But she could not take the hurt that had ignited within, perhaps lying dormant for the inevitable. That she was never the one, she could no longer make them happy. All that she had to offer came up short. All those reasons she had told herself why she was inadequate rang out to be real in a horrible realisation of truth, a view she had shielded her eyes from like looking at the sun. It had swallowed her, submerged her in a grey that clung to her like oil.

Putting on her work clothes, combing her brown hair. Seeing the day instead of cowering in her bed like she wanted. The feeling of detachment and lack lay upon her, making her feel that no one really cared for her in this world. If she turned up to work or not, nothing really mattered in a way. The tears welled and broke forth, streaming down her cheek in a warm river. She had forgotten she was on the metro. Her mother would have been ashamed to see her show such emotion in public, but she did not realise. Too consumed in grief and self-pity she found herself deep beneath the streets of Paris on a metro train that ran all day, every day. Until she felt something nudge her arm softly, yet foreign. She looked up surprised to see a small tissue and concerned smiles greet her. She nodded a thanks and was able to cough up: "Merci, je vais bien," and she smiled slightly, knowing it was true.

The grey was still within her, but in that moment a tiny part had turned to white.

Hope can ignite in the dark heart of the desperate. If covered in a cloak of forgiveness.

RECOVERING THE RICHES

Sold my bones for gold, to buy you back from death.

To resurrect our love. The Lazarus that is dormant in us.

This Faustian pact will lead to regret years from now.

But I had to.

Breathing life into our love, feeling for the pulse. Gluing the pieces back together.

I drain my blood and fill my skin with sand.

So, you no longer haemorrhage anymore.

You're awash with hate and the afterbirth of our arguing.

Cast out this demon, the one that had rooted within me.

Between us.

Forever tapping at your brain.

I'll hew the rocks from the mountain, moving it aside while you drift into recovery.

Laying you on the sea of flowers I've plucked from every stem in the world.

Resurrecting your devotion.

Mouth to mouth.

Licking the emotions that drip onto your skin.

Covering you in diamonds and saccharin.

The artificial sweetener till you seep out the sugar once more.

My doubts and anger are hanging now for the crows, crucified in the Gomorrah of my heart.

All that's left is hope, the perpetual motion machine within me.

Emeralding your spirit, polishing your previous golden soul.

CRUSHED CHALK TO DIAMOND DUST

They did not see; our crucifixion wasn't televised.

The day you broke down and held my hand.

Swimming in chalk, dusting it off our clothes.

Feeling so low and desperate.

The soft surrender of hopelessness.

But we did not die, we did not fade into white.

A burst of control and all the things they'll never know.

Our resurrection, in colour and flesh and bone.

Just a matter of time now until they paint our picture.

Hang it on the wall where the wolves devour other hearts.

Stronger, from here on out.

SALVUS ERIT

A coldness there.

Darkness, placing a hand on my skin.

These eyes close, transportation to a familiar place.

Touching me, the lonely.

Wanting to make an everlasting connection.

It swamps my lungs, and cradles me in arms of hollow bones.

Comfort in this awful place.

A room where I chose what fits, what goes where.

The ghosts mingle and float with intent.

Then a call, a gentle pull.

Like a vein slipping across a bone in motion.

The sounds of the desert, a shofar calling.

It's triumphant song barreling over my eyes.

Calling me like a flame.

God needn't reside in the hand that pulled me out.

Nor in the eyes of the person offering hope.

For they are the same, they are myself.

Smiling and pulling on the little red thread.

Lighting the way forward with tiny sparks.

Saving me from the depths once more.

HOPE AGAINST HOPE

The blood settles, as if time holds its breath.

Cupped in a hush, frightened to flow.

The rest awaits.

A shuffle in the mind.

The attic of the body, like a restless Dorian Gray.

When the eyes reveal the true horror of the ordinary.

A Day, much like yesterday.

Comfort swallows, the needed search forever longing.

Secure and safe.

How else do we move, if not shaken from the spot.

The mountain beckons, a summit that seems never conquerable.

A defeatist voice that echoes in your ears.

Humming its way through your muscles, reversed intent.

Until a swing of the pendulum, a signal fire of age.

Of time wasted, sand spilling from your hands.

Dust in the blood.

Your time is now, it was actually then.

We enjoy the blessing every day, to start again.

LITTLE THINGS

They're little things you worry about.

Stop fretting, relax your mind.

Put aside the fear and doubt.

Happiness will come in time.

Yet I do not live in conscious reason.

I cannot resist to wonder.

That all things change in each passing season.

And it's the little things that pull you under.

MAJESTY AND THE MYSTERY

Stolen time which seeps out of blackness.

Returned like pearls to the sea.

All we know, we have forgotten.

Clearing the realms for wonders to birth.

We close our eyes and catch the breath that escapes.

The Sustaining mist of God.

As this mind coughs up havoc, with its mystery of the unknown.

That pulls with a gravity to the dark and tragic.

God cradles us in feathery hope.

Kissing promise once more into our blood.

Gravitating away from grief.

Running water of certainty in our blood.

For we never truly know what exists.

Beyond the curtain of our eyelids.

FALLING ON A BRUISE

Engulfed in sweet delicious fires.

The needling and licking of moments in time.

Spread out and traversing dimensions.

That lead me ever closer to home.

It shook us momentarily.

A pain that marched along the spine.

Crumbling each vertebra.

Making its way to the heart.

A fall for the nine thousandth time.

Crumbling the scabs not yet healed.

A rise, for the nine thousand and one.

The bruise, disappearing in the dark that surrounds.

It all felt distant.

Told perhaps, by someone else.

Yet lonely births space and freedom.

And the marshes and reeds whispered an awakening.

The pain, transformed to knowledge.

The bruise, fading in light of a new dawn.

HOPE UNDER SKIN

What process is this?

Little daggers of ice, piercing a beating heart.

Oh mother Mary, won't you help.

Sweep away the pain and apocalypse.

Drive out the devil and chalky residue of consequence.

Time collects now, not in a bottle.

But in the cardboard bowls, slightly full.

Mostly struggling.

Preparing for the collapse.

We pray it all away, but still it flows.

Coming in with the tide and with trauma.

Maybe we need holy water.

To wash.

To burn.

Stinging the sins and the scene away.

Raising our Lazarus once more.

THE OTHER SHORE

Scraping it off my soul.

Place the razor, safely first.

Wring out the black. Lighten. Flow. Relax.

Cough. Once, twice. Let the black smoke drift away.

The light is where you shall bathe.

Imprints and sins dig deep like barnacles and sand crabs.

Burrowing for survival.

Yet the Buddhist in me does not wish to kill them.

Shake them off, strip them away. Let the mud and toxic blood diffuse.

Transfuse and melt beyond tomorrow.

Scrubbing my halo.

Dusting off my wings.

Bring my happy back again. In beautiful Technicolor.

A cocktail of antibiotics, hope and acknowledgement accompany my humble pie.

The mirror facing, soul searching reason for change.

And change we must.

The traveling, motioning blurring fight for tomorrow.

The face of you, as I swim to the ocean floor.

LEMONADE

Like I wouldn't know you're the reason.

Before you, there was such terrain.

Speak your name, quietly with religious respect.

Licking you like I would a sweet prayer before bedtime.

Tasting your wonder on my tongue.

Excuse me if this makes you uncomfortable, you just don't know the marvel you've become.

I box your words like chocolates.

Closing the doors in my soul and opening the windows.

Slipping into your loveliness. That day, the day the avalanche came.

That's who you are.

Dipped in brilliance. Making me walk like a cat.

So happy to show me.

Dress you up like a store front window. Make me bow.

Bringing my smile back again.

Take me there.

LEAVE IT TO MEMORIES

Hold on to me, I have seen things that you will never see.

I have seen things that you'll never believe.

Hold on while it hurts. Close your eyes and take my hand.

Shiver out the safety of the ground.

Come with me out of this world.

Where the sweetness will follow you. Distant and warm.

Distance is worn, like a threadbare rug.

The stains of time under foot.

Hold on and try not to breathe.

They hypnotised us into defence. Into regret.

Forty steps to the eighth parallel, one jump into beyond.

Do you believe me now, do you believe yet?

There's nothing up these sleeves. Only the ability to dream.

Spinning Egypt and Atlantis in my hand, spinning you a quieter night.

A peaceful day.

The photograph of us that will never fade and shows us only in reverse.

Clearer, like ebb tides and dragonflies.

Where the sorrow subsides.

CARTOON CRAZY

No one knows how the thoughts spin inside.

The jumbled sweet confectionery of ideas.

You want to seep my colour away. Press me into your own imaginings.

Avoid my seriousisation if you must, but this well is deep.

These limbs can buck, bend and break; yet I can contort to what you wish.

I bleed too you know. A Fact you sometimes forget.

I can be the most spineless to prop up your happiness.

Kissing your feet while you wash your hands clean.

But my screen will flicker to life, the roar of sound and fury.

My cartoon crazy, running back and forth with renewed energy.

Spilling more ink while you try to erase me.

SLIPPING ON STARS

Lost in words, sweet syllables and lullabies.

Knowing too well the winners write the rule books.

Always first in the end, then onto the beginning. Re-structuring my world away.

April night, waiting for the moon to sleep.

Had enough fights to make sure the bruises will never fade. Leaving it all behind.

Choking on solar flares, breathing in a new tomorrow.

The stakes never higher, you chased me from pole to pole, frozen in your righteousness.

Your need to be right and your tries that bind. Trying to be me, trying to be something different.

But I wipe this away and breathe in the galactic air.

Allowing cosmosis to take me deep within you, and all your little galaxies.

The Pisces in me is rising, questioning my reasons to stay; as always.

But the chrysalis of us has flared and I'm strolling now in your starry garden.

Letting us rest upon my shoulders.

Slipping on stars and sliding into deeper space.

Orbiting you, questioning Copernicus.

Blinded once more by your light.

A quiet radiance unfurled in my chest, as if some ancient star finally remembered my name.

SLIPPING INTO SOMETHING

Trying to escape and trying to remain.

Stuck in flux.

The flightless bird high up in the sky, surprised by its own surroundings.

My home was my own gallows, my seat of self-destruction.

To break free, to dissolve into tiny shards of metallic light.

Longing for change.

You called me forth, humming the chorus of love.

Magnetised in your splendour.

And now, you un-cork the bottled time and let it flow.

They deluge over me, icy cold that stings like sharp realizations.

Time, and you, are precious; and I won't waste either.

Live, seek and love.

Folding in your convalescent wings.

Watching it all through glass.

TWISTING THE TWINE

I sit on the string of this, above the chasm.

Watching the wind.

Watching the emotions.

The vastness between us and the closeness in my cells.

Each blink and heartbeat vibrate on this wire.

With no safety net.

With no one there to catch us if we fall.

Only our arms outstretched together, in the loving embrace of the plummet.

But we walk.

We tiptoe. On the egg shelled stained thread of love.

Ever closer to Eden and the tree in my mind.

We've loved and lost, then loved again.

Around in the circle of our souls.

Blinded by bitterness and the sting of the self-righteous.

But now the fog of war has lifted.

The spoils are swept away as we welcome the tangerine sky of dawn.

Bringing in the light that burns our eyes, after so long in the dark.

Hold me, don't ever leave me. Love me on this tightrope forever.

FREEDOM IS A PRIVILEGE

Did you remember, or were you hoping to forget?

Underneath this skin, brown and coarse like the worked route.

That strange fruit.

Was red and wet.

What were you hoping for, a different kind of history?

One without me. Without such pity.

Look back in disgust if you must.

But these strong roots have grown from that toil.

Of being in a place that we should never have been.

Never being seen.

If we spin the past and tip it over.

Reverse the world and replace colour with white.

How would you have felt with the blood on your shoulders?

And not on your hands, as you sleep at night.

Under this skin, of white and of brown.

In the bones that register no preference for colour.

That break on impact, and hearts that hurt all the same.

And as this world grows again much darker, and fear and hate find new friends.

Extend your hands and reach for any colour palm.

And fight once again for freedom.

ARBORETUM OF THE MIND

Those words they buried.

The thorny ones with discontent.

Maligned manners from blackened hearts.

They rotted in my mind.

In that grey earthy soil.

Those tears they watered.

Digging down deep to the black pit of my soul.

Like potatoes which found the light.

Deep in the dark such acorns of defiance sprouted.

Filling my bones with vines and life.

So now I prune, and potter.

I bask in the shade of a cooling tree.

That borne within me; my arboretum of solitude.

My tree of life with bark as tough as nails.

And leaves that never turn, despite the season.

Or the early winter you threaten.

A SILENT CHORUS

Inside the hollow, deep within.

Inside this heart that stutters.

Rests a reason, surrounding in a rhyme.

Thought lost for all time.

Yet dwelling quietly, silently; covered in light.

Awaiting the day sweet rains wash over it.

Like saliva on a tongue. Throbbing with such intent.

To lick away all malcontent, and chorus and ring the new dawn.

CONTRACT & CONSTRUCT

That reason we all had for being there.

Through shared DNA and the tears of Jesus.

Waiting for the smoke to clear and the dust to settle.

Yet deep inside a fire burns.

Turning all to ashes and cleansing from within.

Who do you ask forgiveness of?

As you hand across a world that is riddled with pain.

What did you blame as you clung to indifference?

When the world darkened as black as the night.

But do not drown in this consequence.

Or be blown away in this havoc.

It may be borrowed time, but it is ours to own.

And the rest is still unwritten.

A CALLING

This life is a blend of black and grey.
I've come here now to take you away.
And hold your hand, in the face of sorrow
You're wrong to say that, please just go.
There are things here that you will never know.
I always have, the hope of tomorrow.
But tomorrow is now out of your hands.
The pain will come, you won't understand.
When your heart and soul, will be nevermore.
That's why I grasped her hand so tight.
We fled right there out into the night.
And she took me away, to unseen shores.

GIRL ON THE MOUNTAIN

"Hang on, we'll get there soon," she said, changing gear as the car struggled up the road.

The incline was harsh, and the trees that surrounded them hid the true dominance of the hills in this area. They had been travelling for nearly three hours and they were all tired, having gotten up so early for the journey. This part of the country was new to them all, and as the car snaked its way up through the trees, they were eager to see the open hills and valleys they'd been told to expect.

Jessica rolled down the window in the backseat, letting the cool air and murky smell of the woods flood the car. She'd told nearly everyone at school she was going away for a few days, off to Wales and to hopefully see a dragon. They'd laughed and joked with her, taking the real reason for the trip away from her mind where it had only rested gently and fleetingly. She promised to bring them back something Welsh, though she didn't know what that could be.

"Don't get too cold back there," Rachel said, shivering herself as she changed gear once more. Their little car struggled against the demands of the road, but it had not failed them yet. Rachel had only been here once, back when she was a very small child, and she remembered nothing of it. Her grandmother had always visited them. It seemed selfish of her now, in all those years she'd never visited her in return. Now, with her body about to be placed into the ground, she'd set forth to the soil that Amelia called home.

They suddenly burst through the trees as the car rounded a bend. A huge drop on one side bedded a stream nestled at the bottom, all grey and motionless. The brightness dazed her momentarily and she blinked repeatedly as she drove on, the white and grey sky sprawling out over the huge expanse before them.

Richard tucked the map back into the glove compartment. He'd dug it out from an old box they kept in the spare room, the room where most things got dumped in their house. They'd found it useful, but they were nearly there now, and a signpost showed that in fourteen miles they would reach their destination. He'd also found the map made him feel useful, reading it as they travelled, pointing out the sights along the way to Jessica. Not being able to drive made him feel a bit useless from time to time, even though Rachel enjoyed it. He reached down the side and retrieved the bag of sherbet lemons, offering it back to Jessica, who took one and popped it into her mouth. He took one too, offering it to Rachel who said no thanks, so he ate it himself and ruffled the white bag closed, licking the powder from his fingers.

"No dragons yet," he said, aiming the words back at Jessica. She kicked his chair playfully.

"Nanna Amy once told us about one which slept in the mine near the village. She said the workmen had to send a sheep into the cave to distract it while they worked," Rachel said, catching Jessica in her rear-view mirror.

"What happened to the sheep?" she asked, somewhat alarmed.

"Well, it usually came ambling out at the end of the day. I think it just used to get chased around the caves," Rachel said, grinning.

“Must be a playful dragon, or not interested in eating sheep,” she said, looking out the window now as they began to head down into the valley.

Jessica watched as the green and grey flashed before her. She could see huge hills off in the distance. The trees seemed sparse, but little fluffs of them peppered the area, much like green sheep caught up high.

“What time is the service again?” Richard asked, turning to look at Rachel just as a light rain began to splatter the window.

“Oh no, not rain,” she said, turning on the wipers.

“It’s Wales, what did you expect?” he said, and she smiled.

“I was hoping to get there before we got caught in any rain. These roads might be tricky in wet weather. Urm, three o’clock is the service but they want us there at two thirty. I know aunty Glad wants to get us settled, and to show us off no doubt before,” she said, the wipers increasing now as the light rain turned suddenly heavy.

Jessica watched as a huge bank of dark clouds rolled in above them. A car passed on the other side, the first one they’d seen in a while, its headlights on now in the rain. She looked out across the valley once more, following the line of the hills with her finger on the windowpane, breathing on it to mark her way.

“Hey, what’s that?” she said, tapping the glass.

They all looked to the left, though Rachel only for a moment before returning her eyes to the road.

“I’m not sure, why would...” Richard began, and Jessica added:

“There’s someone at the top of the hill. They have a fire,” she said, squinting to make them out in the rain and the distance.

“Why would someone be out in this weather on the top of a hill?” Rachel asked, noting the sign whizz by. Nearly there.

“Well, they are it seems. The flame is struggling in the wind though,” Richard said, and as he did the little flame seemed to burst a bit brighter for a moment, a beacon atop the hill.

“That’s really weird,” Jessica said, her window now rolled up as the rain had come in too heavy.

They carried on, leaving the hill behind them until Rachel made a left, turning off towards the village. Richard could still see the hill with the person on it as the car trundled down a rough road, skimming over the stream they had followed along. Soon enough they arrived, the stone cottages and buildings littering their way as if giant rocks had been dropped from the sky and the people below had carved houses out of them.

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They all sat inside Pen-y-Waun, Aunt Gladys’s little cottage which looked out to the moor. Jessica munched on the custard creams that Gladys had placed on a very delicate little plate, while her mum sipped her tea.

"You call that heavy, nothing but a little spit of rain," Gladys said, dunking a biscuit into her bone china cup. Jessica noticed the pattern, a little brown dragon curving around the side with trees and flowers decorating the edges.

"Well, it was hard to drive the last few miles. It was fine most of the way," Rachel said, nestling her cup on her knee.

"Weather for a funeral, tears from God. Amy would've hated a clear day. Still, at least you made it safe. Remember any of it?" she asked Rachel.

Rachel shook her head.

"You were young, surprised if you could remember, though not much to remember really. But you were happy, always a smiling child. And your brother, good kids," she said, but at the mention of her brother Rachel slunk down in her seat a little. "So, you're here until next week then?"

"Oh no, just a couple of days. Don't want to impose," Richard said.

"You're family, there's no imposing. Stay as long as you like. Be nice to have a few more faces around here to be honest. They all seem to be dropping off. God rest 'em," Gladys said, reaching for another biscuit.

"Are there many in the village then?" Richard asked.

Gladys pushed her horn-rimmed glasses up her nose, licking the crumbs away before speaking.

"When the mines were working, loads of us here. Now most of the cottages are empty half the time. They rent them out for holidayers now, getting them all up from Bristol and the like. Come here for the quietness. Hmph," she said.

"Is it not so quiet then?" Jessica asked, and Gladys cast her a curious smile.

"Jessica has heard about the Welsh dragons," Rachel said, smiling.

"Dragons eh, I could tell you some tales. But that's not what makes this place what it is."

"Is it the person on the hill, with the flame? Is it for the dragons?" Jessica said, sitting forward in her chair.

Gladys put her cup down.

"It's nearly quarter to, we best be getting a move on," she said, hauling her large frame up out of her chair. Jessica knew when grownups didn't want to talk about something, but she felt suddenly invisible there in that little cottage.

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The wind had picked up as they walked across to the small church. Most were already inside, but a few were making their way down the road towards the little building which stuck up on a ridge at the top of the village. Richard and Rachel walked slowly up towards the building, following Gladys who waved solemnly to the others as they came.

She suddenly put her arm around Jessica and pulled her in close, almost swaddling her in her black jacket.

“You saw the girl then?” she asked her, almost in a whisper. Jessica’s eyes lit up.

“A girl was it, a girl then?” she asked.

“Yes, she’s a girl alright. The girl of the mountain. You are lucky to see her,” she said, slowing her pace as they got closer to the church.

“What’s she doing, who is she?” Jessica asked.

“That is a hard thing to answer. No one knows who she is, but we know why she is there. Not many outsiders see her, course she usually isn’t there in the day. You must be more connected to this land than you realise,” she said, touching the girl’s chin kindly, flicking it with her crinkled thumb.

“Why is she there with a fire, is it to do with dragons?” she asked. Gladys shook her head.

“No, nothing to do with dragons. She is there to light the way. She is a beacon when there is sorrow in the village. Amy, your great grandmother, was much loved here. She was a spark of joy and happiness in this little corner of the world, this grey world which can feel quite foreboding. The girl of the mountain is there to remind us that everything will be okay, that there is light even in the darkness,” she said, profoundly.

“But who is she, is she a ghost?” Jessica asked, curious.

“She is something that perhaps doesn’t need explaining. She is there to remind us to spark our own light in the rain and fog of life,” she replied.

“So, everything will be good again, after the loss and the pain?” Jessica asked. Gladys looked down at her.

“You are beyond your years aren’t you. You’ll have to visit more often; I like company that has its head screwed on right. But yes, things will be good again. This will pass,” she said, and they made their way into the small church with Rachel and Richard following behind.

“It’s cold isn’t it, shame about the rain,” Rachel said, stepping up the steps.

“It is, but the organ music is somewhat cheerful considering. Nothing sombre which is nice.” He took her hand, and for some reason they stopped and looked around them. Through the rain and the clouds, they could see a little smudge of yellow dancing off in the distance. They did not know it, but the girl on the mountain was singing as her flame burned on through the weather. Sweet words of redemption and hope.

Wind is strong, but don’t you sway.

The pain is heavy but will give way.

This light I bear will warm your heart.

All will be right, begin from the start.

And in that trembling spark, I felt the universe remember me.

PERSISTENCE OF THE UNFORGETTING

Sunken deep like forgotten wrecks.
A hate that broods, contorts and flex.
This grudge is old and just like oil.
Black with time, and within me coils.
Staining my soul with its heartless rind.
Unforgotten, despite the passage of time.
But time has come to break the bond.
That swirling hole, that stagnant pond.
I will no longer give food to the beast.
It is to the wolves I throw this feast.
A stinking blood drool of unwanted flesh.
Cut from my heart, and so refreshed.
Then wrapped in a tourniquet of letting go.
With hope that in that hole, some love will grow.

ASSUMING SUCH REGRET

Shaking while the structures fell.

Watching as the house burns.

Departure seemed the only possibility.

But what caused us to remain?

Clearing up the wreckage, counting the shards of the moon we forgot we stole.

Little parts of yourself that clung with the moon dust.

What ambivalence we had for time.

Laughing in the face of it while the world spun.

Now a suitcase filled with memories aches to be moved.

And all talk of solo flying ruffles these steel feathers.

How can I remain while you plan on deserting me?

The orchids weep in the face of such kinetic air.

A tolerance, only from afar.

Little familiar fingers bring words to mind.

Dramatic embarrassments in the downturn of something hopeful.

A future love, packaged and boxed; sent out into the world.

We wear the familiar on our sleeve, little desperations join the others that weigh into the world.

A first white flag raises with the new dawn.

And our name-tags turn to you and I.

Strangers wishing to join the others, and the multitudes of our successors.

Blaming the past for never finding god in the like-minded sorrow.

Who promised the world, and only received tomorrow.

SO MUCH CLEARER

Deep in the depths of history, and the things you will never see.

Heads held high.

Sweetness following the fall.

Burying the ill-gotten hand-me-down partial bothers.

Wrapped in tear-soaked parcels and mislabelled.

Wait for the recognition to subside.

Breathe, and live the new with wonder.

Crack the salt that built up in your eyes.

Those passers-by.

Cut the honey from your lips.

Turn down the voices that always lied.

(Nothing free is gold)

Save a little magic for the one who always smiled.

Lemonade and teddy bear parades.

The look of a child at a sight never seen.

Believe in the obscene.

The truth never told that we can all be free.

Strung up in a new history.

Bottling this hope for the future.

GLASS

I buried your words in a glass in the garden.
Trapped them like fireflies in the twilight of this trying.
This break suffocates.
These shards scrape at my skin.
But I tucked them all in, away in the dirt.
Hoping they would remain.
That comforting lie.
A heart made of glass is easily shattered.
You step on the pieces, complain of the splinters.
Never once indestructible.
Then a thunder came and the rains fell.
Lightning struck as the storm of you raged on.
Turning my glass heart back to sand.
Reduced to grains of love, coarse and plentiful.
Yet now a shore only for my own sad sea.
A Lonely desert isle.
Hoping for a glass bottle of hope.
To once again wash ashore.

LIGHT

The light in a teardrop, approaching.
Destroying the dark that sits like soil on your cheeks.
A wrecking river of black, dispelled by a single candle.
That single effort of change.
Who knows how small the room is when the lights are off.
When the darkness wins.
Yet each day the universe contracts, birthing out the sun.
Raining down solar tears to burn away the oil.
Speckle me now with Aztec gold hidden in the sky.
A craved warmth and a touch from god.
Too long in the cold and dark, we've become skeletons to sadness.
Choking on soot and solitude.
My eyes wish for radiation, to burn away the memories.
Of a time and state that held me prisoner.
We now feel such rapture in the knowing.
That nothing lasts forever.

SAINTS (ATTACHED)

The blankness of the shadows that pass.
Yet wonders dwell underneath.
Hidden stories that flow like lava mines.
Emotions running deep.
Eyes that meet on the train.
Skin that breathes all the same.
We are each a spark of light.
Glowing intermittently in the cold expanse of now.
Reduced down as the 20th century folded.
The devils may click their tongues.
Hiding in caves and pits of pain.
Dipping into those darkness pools.
But we are stronger in the sun.
It burns away the filth of forever.
Shedding the past so the wings can rise.
Renewed and burning with our soular flame.
So you may move with purpose and an elevated heart.
Often reminded of the angels you're among.

LIFE IS A CIRCLE

A tragedy laps at this water's edge.

Dark oily waves.

Flotsam of time scattered.

Moments bobbing in their crystalline freeze.

Like jewels sparkling on the neck of God.

Broken Christmas decorations on a dead tree.

How do you see?

This water, once pure, travelled around the world.

Circled and familiar.

Dipping your mind in to see this all before.

Teaching you again, yet you choose to forget.

Life is a circle.

It comes around, reminding you over and over.

What to lose, what to cherish.

To drop away what pulls you down.

Looking in to see your own reflection.

When you should hope to see the face of god.

For the divine is alive and breathes through your skin.

Yet we forget, the states we are in.

Beginning at the end, missing the arrival as we depart.

Life is a circle.

It starts and ends in your heart.

And in that soft returning light, I felt the first true warmth of becoming whole again.

THE FALL WILL KILL US BOTH

Walking on this wire.

I see the sea below us.

Cool and deep like the thoughts of Mother Earth.

Take my hand.

There is nothing to catch us if we tumble.

Down into the shark-filled ponds of loneliness.

Scattering petals of our bloom.

Where our bones will turn to coral.

And you will dig down into the sand.

Foot follows foot as we walk.

Inching along the eggshell laden rope.

Banana skin memories drop like raining frogs.

I profit from my certainty.

These plagues are temporary.

Hold me if I slip.

I will catch you if you stumble.

Walking on this wire, we must be careful.

Because the fall will kill us both.

CONSPICUOUS BY ITS ABSENCE

Welcome to the survival.

The nest in the mind, padded with gold and turpentine.

Cleansing the stain of a life lived in regret.

Galvanising all that remains.

Precious in its circumstance.

Your uniqueness burns like a church candle.

Sacred.

Cherished.

Sanctified and blessed by its very existence.

Placed there by someone who cared to care.

What is lost, can be forgotten.

The darkness leaves little space.

We fill this void with flowers.

Where the teeth once were rotten.

An ivory tower of hope now climbs.

All inside.

Built back upon tears and upheaval.

Pulled out from the most terrible of histories.

Yet still breathing, a product of now.

Electrified by the thought of change.

Scatter your sparks into the spaces that ache in emptiness.

And save yourself, for only you ever can.

DISTANT THUNDERS

The glittering eternity of the night sky.
Finding heaven as a reference point.
Powdered divinity dusting my soul.
The glowing ebbs of long dying embers.
When the fires swept through, it stole all.
Finding hurt as its oxygen.
A great engine of pain.
But my fortress could not be burned.
At its centre, a well of strength.
Plumbed by the depths of my existence.
My being.
The only reason, is you.
Why I walk the earth and breathe air once recycled.
Brought to me by northward currents.
The smell of eucalyptus and heat.
Entering my eyes and skin.
Reimagining the smudge of a memory.
The red smeared mark of you.
You.
The reason I battle forth.
Carry on in your unending war on love.
Though these wounds we bleed cry red tears.
I know you will be there at the final fall.
Soaking everything away with love.

FLOWER IN SHELLS

To be the shell in your pocket, or the pebble in your shoe.

Allows the skin that covers you, to take me in.

Closer to your flesh that breathes.

Fragrant like a flower of hope.

Seeing everything.

Closer to God.

SPUME OR SOLIDIFY

Is it so hard to stay with me forever?

Or tear the hearts that fuse and tether.

Like an animal tied to a stake.

I circle around and shiver and shake.

So choose it now, and choose together.

A bursting wonder, to weld or sever.

ABIDING TO THE CALLS OF AN IMMUTABLE FATE

Wiping smiles that smear.
Sticky and iridescent on this soul.
Spun up in a tangled web of dreams.
Ones that glowed in the ashes.
Tumbling embers.
The moonlight and sunlight trapped.
Sparkling like forever diamonds of wonder.
We place ourselves in the centre of this covenant.
A vessel, a conduit of hope.
Where you crack and splinter.
The gold of our love drips in and fuses shut.
That Japanese way, all smiles and bowing.
Head bowing, heart directed towards the seventh heaven.
Cupped in our hands.
Precious, fragile.
Determined, defiant; as strong as religion.
You kiss, I receive.
I slip inside that familiar soul.
Rearranging the furniture within.
A place to rest bones and desires that flutter like butterflies.
Ones that freshly taste the air of life.
Dipped in tears of God.
So that they fly forever.

ASCEND

What have you done?

Today, this life; where have you gone?

Which angry root did you pull out?

What weak bone did you break?

What flood turned to drought?

Which love to an ache.

You may forget everything in the end.

As time shuffles by, and souls begin to bend.

But you have each moment, each second in the sun.

A little tiny diamond, reserved for each one.

To pick up today, and more the day after.

A small little treasure, like happiness and laughter.

So forget the mould and oil that covers you like gloom.

And go out and discover; shoot for the moon.

LOVE IS ALSO HOPE

Breaths coming, like exhales from heaven.

Lapping at me like the tide of eternity.

I watch you dream.

Capturing the stillness, frozen in ice.

Long have we climbed.

Battling ourselves and the elements.

Shouting into the wind.

Now all around is still.

Silent like the first snow.

I taste you like that snowflake on my tongue.

Tasting of winter, and childhood memories of safety.

You whisper out, calling me into your dream.

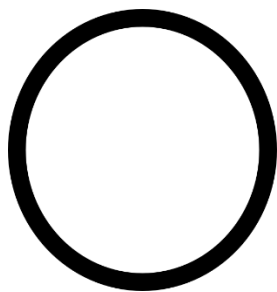
Puffs of words escaping your precious lips.

Cracked open like an oyster.

The white hurries.

Ghosts vanish.

And you tell me, this was never a dream.



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