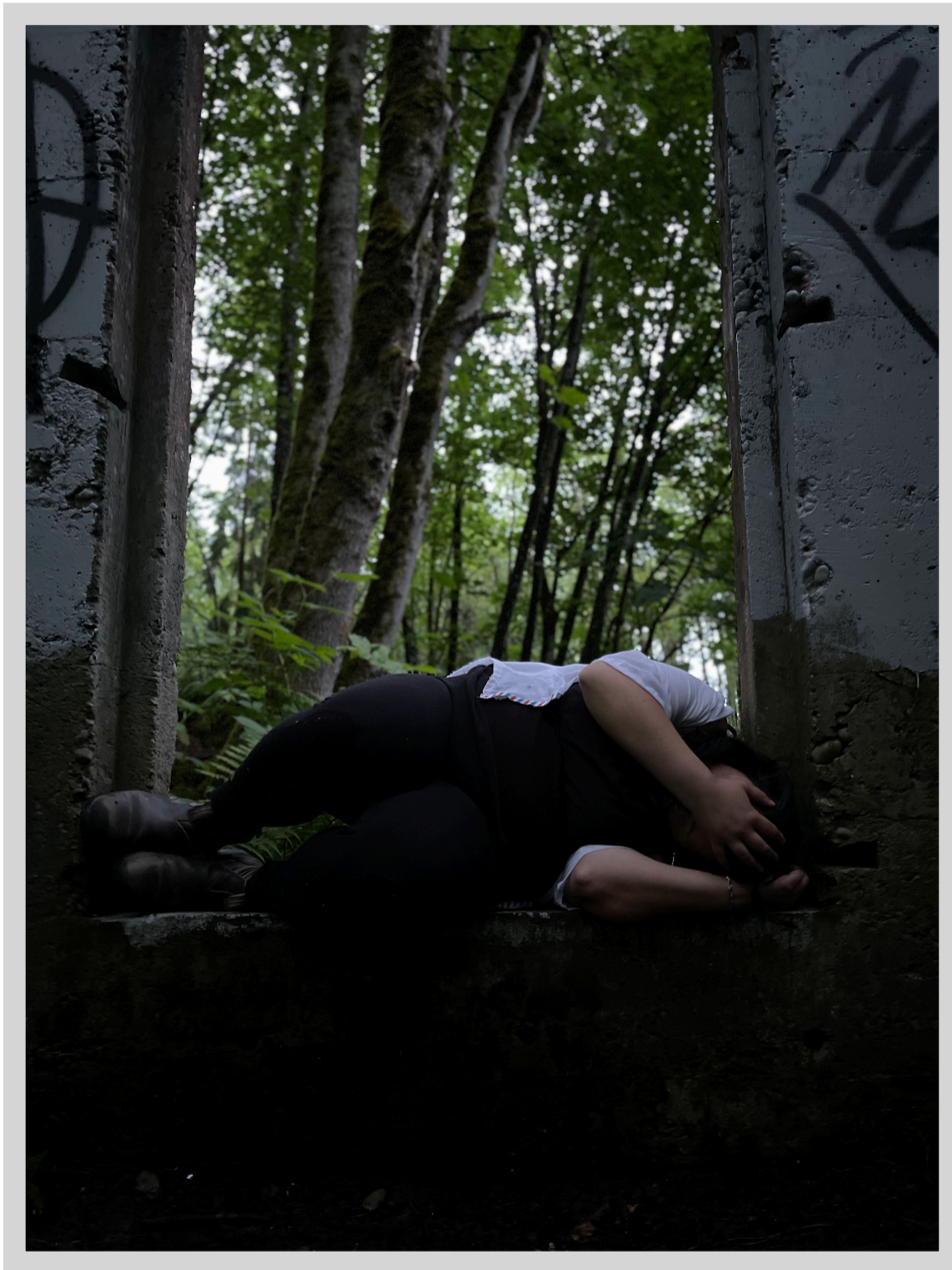


The Bleeding Ache



Sharin F. Ali

To my depression:

You do not own me

You do not define me

But you exhaust me.

I spend all my waking hours fighting you. My body and mind a battleground between depression and anxiety. I live in constant fear, hopeless for a cure for this sadness and despair.

Afraid of abandonment and loneliness, I isolate myself.
Panic consumes me and I have nowhere to go.

I have no present and no future, just a past that haunts me and makes this depression linger in my life. Waiting for me to succeed so it can take it all away from me.

To young Sharin, you did everything you could. To everyone struggling with mental health, this is for you. This is for us. You are not alone and someone knows how you feel.

Before you delve into my poetry. I would like to acknowledge that there are topics that may be triggering to some. My poetry discusses heavy topics such as self-harm, suicide ideation, substance use, depression, anxiety and PTSD. If you or someone you know is struggling please reach out for help.

Crisis Services Canada: 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645

The Ache

Loneliness I

Loneliness is like a weed cracking through the pavement
breathing through suffocation the days bring
passing me by like a train i tried to run for but missed
again and again.

loneliness is like a thorn wedged into my chest
sometimes i cant find the strength to get comfortable with the bleeding ache
that runs down my body like a fault line
fighting to pull away
or a river that forgets its way through the valley
licking its own wounds and mistakes against the smothered walls
too hurt to say sorry.

sometimes loneliness is like passing out
when my blood cells are deprived of oxygen
its ok

because i wont feel for a while
but my heart protest because its love has been deprived
causing cells to die
and the networks to collapse like i do
at the end of the day
after i carry loneliness up too many hills
i tried to let go of it
but it clung onto me and my body
begging me not to let go
because its all i have.

Lonely

I stop myself from letting other people know I'm lonely
i will always be lonely
and i should learn to live with it and make it my friend
it doesn't matter where i am or who i am with
loneliness is always in the background
like a song whispering through a party
as people communicate and share stories
laughing and gasping when appropriate
it taps me on the shoulder when i'm doing well
reminds me of my failure to connect with others that surround me
i like to think that I'm a lost cause
as loneliness always catches up with me
no matter where i am
it finds me when i'm most vulnerable
anywhere, everywhere and nowhere
i try not to care or let it bother me
but it finds a way through my bones
and makes it s home there
in a place where strength prevails
loneliness hails.

Homesick

I feel homesick although I'm home
the houses grow faster than the mountains
and the gardens bloom dead
i guide my hands along the cave of my hall
into a solemn submarine
where i shower off sleep and faded possibilities
i never tried.
as the sun puckers into a raisin
there are only so many movements i can make
lying in bed
hallucinations make my dreams vivid
as the numbers on the clock jolt
and turn into wasted figures and chances
they become tucked into my alveoli
in hopes
of keeping hope alive.

Ambition

When the TV glows
omnipresent at the end of the day
providing no warmth
in its patches of grey
i flick it off
realizing that my ambitions are the same
falsities that keep me disconnected
leaving me questioning my accomplishments
were they worth the alienation i asked for?
as others start their gardens full of promise
i have yet to gain the seeds to sew success
in this new decade i enter
i wonder if the fruits of my labour
will feed the loneliness
i can't contain
its a different kind of hunger
that can never be tamed.

Chances

How do you know it's your last chance?
that maybe the last words that were said
hung in the room like quotation marks
were your last chance
or how the last time you had dinner with someone
you felt like you were becoming the past
it left you wondering why you tried to reciprocate yourself
wringing your heart out over and over
trying to give all your love away
because you feel its true
and they leave you slowly
as the night paints itself into the lonely lit streets you find yourself on
night after night wondering at what time
the change to leave presented itself
before it broke.

Phantom Limb

Its funny how someone can trickle into your thoughts
and stream through you
leaving you to sink
as if they were rocks in a river
i still find it funny how you treated me like i was a limb
how could you dispose of me so easy
was it hard?
taking me apart
ripping me from you
like i was a limb you never needed
do i haunt you?
i feel your loss when i come to the city
your heart beat no longer murmurs and gushes its phrases into the crowds
it ceased to exist when you left
and barred me out someplace else
its funny because im over you
but the brashness of the past
scours my ability to forget
how you tore me apart
and left me hanging
like a limb.

Burden of Speech

my mouth is swollen with the truth
but cannot speak.

Honest

Being honest

hurts me more

than it hurts you

because i know

you will never be honest

with me.

Purpose

I lose my purpose
every time i trip
it falls out of my pockets
and from my eyes
dusted off my hands
and on the ground it lays
and i don't know what my purpose is again
when i get up.

Burden of Sadness (Ghost of a Girl)

I feel like such a burden
because sadness is the heaviest emotion to carry
its like a dead body
you forgot to dispose of
and it decays inside of you
leaving the bones of a person
you used to be
before sadness danced into your life
one night when you were in bed
thinking of all the things you could have been by now
and you still lay there
heavy and hopeless
no matter how many times
you shift around in bed
you cant shake it off your sheets
or out of your hair
it just lays there beside you
like the ghost of a girl
who once had it all.

Pedestal

I put you on a pedestal so high
that when you fell
i wasn't the only thing that broke your fall
but all my love for you too.

Flooded Embankments

I watched your eyes turn into flooded embankments
overflowing all the feelings you couldn't hold in anymore
you thought you could hold it all inside
that when you shut your eyes
they became sandbags
holding back the dam
all the unspoken truths you wanted to expose but couldn't
who would hold you
when you flood the space between the two of you
drowning yourself
and the other person with you.
they'll leave anyways
so you hold all the feelings inside
until it rains so hard inside
that your head can't take it anymore
and you burst through all the dams you built
to hold in the truth.

When it Rains on the Inside, Your Crying on the Outside

I didn't realize
i'd be scheduling time to cry
the tears come on their own now
on their own agenda
to make me feel heavy
cemented in all my problems
i'm so hollow and hungry
on the inside
my body is a well
overflowing with water
i can't muster the strength to eat whole foods
i feel unworthy of their nutrients
when i feel swollen with emptiness
and the denial about how i really feel
my body becomes an over flooded embankment
washing away the best parts of me.

Demands of Drowning

You'd think drowning would get easier
that our lungs already partially filled by water
could take on more
that the more you lose touch with yourself
is like drowning away
all the plans you had for yourself
washed away by the crashing waves
from the storms stirred up
by life and all its demands
leaves you sinking
closer to the person
you used to be.

Bullet

You bit the bullet
and lay in bed
waiting for it to go down
you had no intention of swallowing
the whole truth until you got to bed
it illicit's every fear now.
your sheets dissolving into the sea
of some place you never wanted to be
your pillows coated in salty dreams
remembering everything ingrained in your mind
in great detail
of how things used to be.

Sleepless

When i ward of sleep
the night becomes a long hallway i try to avoid
loneliness turns time into water
where it slips away from me.

The Bleed

Inner Child

I feel you drifting to me when i try to sleep
i feel your pain falling down my face
emptying onto my chest
the wound peels back
and i carry pain for two stillborn people
just wanting to grow.

Beast

You cant save her
from the beasts in the night
she lies in bed and screams
because thats all she can do
pleading for help that never comes
all the excuses she hears from others
are that they are too busy saving themselves to care
so she screams as the pain writhes in her
sometimes she wishes she can bleed it out
drown out the sounds in her head
but she can't get herself to draw the first line
because she feels too much inside
when she wants to feel she can't
and when she runs away she's stuck
burning in a hell
that no one understands.

The Bleeding Ache

Sometimes i want to take a knife to my chest
and drive it through my sternum
and down my womb
breaking through bones that have become soft
with every heaving breath that leaves my lungs
bruises my ribs
sorrow comes out in wails
from the grave my body becomes
opening up a wound that is visible to me
and no one else
the pain unable to be housed in this vessel
becomes a bleed throughout my body
that cannot be stopped.
I stand in the distance
away from it all
fall to my knees
beneath it all
and let the madness trail behind me
because i know i can't out run it
it comes to me
before i have a head start.

Devour Me

I think the depression that devours me whole
stems from the absence of love, acceptance, belonging, stability and happiness
all things i will never know
simple yet so complicated
i torture myself
by feeding myself a simple syrup comprised of sadness
one size fits all
i force feed myself
choking down a chalky concoction
that makes me ache from my shoulders, into my ribs
ripping through my back
the agony of creating feelings to fix my wounded body
takes a toll on my health
i feel the leftovers fester in my chest
and open a wound that never seems to heal
i feel the pain radiate throughout my body
my arms make good vantage points to let it all out
in desperation i attempt to make the first cut
and i feel
ALIVE
ripe with desire to feel
i cant go on....
i cant make it....
i stand and grip the edge of the counter
and wait for the waves of mourning
to tear through my body
and devour me whole.

Sometimes I Sleep with Smirnoff

Vodka makes me feel like
what love is
late at night
i take straight passive shots
and feel it burn through my body
it warms my face
like two hands cupping my cheeks
to the side of someones face
to theirs
my mind in a loving haze of after sex
and virginal thoughts
the damning truth baptizing my soul
that no one wants me
as i lie on the floor.
if i was wanted
i would be laying in bed
beside someone other than Smirnoff.

Songs from a Violin

My skin

the strings of a violin

the blade- a bow

sweeping across

scratching out line after line

making me bleed

solemn melodies

out from my soul

out of my body

and into the world

the sad songs of being alone

when all you want to be is held.

Sound Scapes

Sound makes spaces in my head
where the voices of people used to be.

Presence/ Present

I struggle to stay in the present
when i cant feel my own presence in the room.

Don't Call Me Brave

Don't call me brave

when i can barely make it out of my house
without falling to my knees
subdued by the world

don't call me brave

when i lose the battle with my feelings in public
tears spilling down my face
a white flag
that i surrender to everything
and give up the fight

don't call me brave

when I'm trying to find comfort in chaos
shifting my focus to the negative
because its all i have in the darkness

don't call me brave

when i don't feel alive
my hearts still beating
but my mind has died

call me brave

when i finally die
when i loose the battle
of being alive.

Existing

Existing is so painful

i don't know how I'm going to make it

eleven more months

only to live another twelve.

Feel it All

My life becomes a funeral

every time i lose myself to my feelings

i die at the hands of my own grief

lay buried beside it

in my own defeat.

Flood on the Floor

There is something comforting
about the way the tiles on the floor
cradle my head
as i cant figure out what to cry about first.

Drowning

I feel trapped underwater
so i lay on the floor
and stop fighting the current
because i'm too tired to go on anymore.

Body of Water

I lay in bed at 10:24pm
my body in a dark ocean
i cant see around me
and i know i'm alone
i'm too tired to cry out
because i know its not worth expending the energy
to try and see if anyone is out there.

its 4:41am and i still lay there
lost in some abyss
there is no light in the dark
and i'm too tired to bat my eye lashes
and move my body to the other side.

its 9 am
i still lay there empty
my bed sheets produce no evidence
that anyone is alive here
as i lay there
unsure if i exist.

The Bottom

I sink to the bottom
of my sea of despair
and i lay there
my body disintegrates from the pressure
of being at the bottom
my chest carved out hollow
from the hell i've wallowed in
wading in the depths of my depression
i've carried this sadness too long
sank to the bottom of my soul
and waited until it was too much to bear
broke open my insides
inked my pain into the ocean
so I could float in comfort of the uncomfortable
drown out the sounds of my heartache
and sleep cloaked in the sadness that never drifts away.

Medication

This medication makes my subconscious tell me stories while i sleep
every night

i lay abandoned and bruised

like the sun before it rises

left to lick its wounds

in the promise it needs to bring the morning

i lay in bed mourning all the relationships lost

and i don't know whose fault it is anymore

but i regret not saying 'i love you'

even though

i know it means nothing.

I love you

rolls off my tongue

and down the sides of this house

and into the gutter

where i lay waiting...

for when i will wake up

and shake this sadness from my head

instead

i think about sticking my head through the wall

in hopes of seeing the other side

and re-balance the chemicals in my brain again.

Maybe i can be normal again

and try to have a life like you

and everyone else.

Mask

the medication masks the pain
my thoughts are shadows in my head
(i cant get out of my head)
the thoughts i can never get rid of
get turned into ghosts
that wander my mind
like some purgatory i cant resolve
i just lay there in bed
with no strength to get up
as i waste my energy thinking
it's all going to be ok.

Nouns and Adjectives

You throw all kinds of nouns and adjectives at me
like brave and survivor
when i'm hardly surviving
and not very brave.

Change

Tears spill out of my eyes like loose change

you stand there

begging me to change

and i am

but it's not good enough for you.

Rabbit Hole

Down the rabbit hole i go
again and again
you bruise me with your words
you know I'm fragile
you can smell me a while away
the fox came for me
in the form of a friend
(i just needed a friend)
and you got me where i hurt
pulling insecurities out from under my feet
i tumble onto my knees
begging for mercy
but you wont let me repent anymore
wont hear my truths anymore
you take my truth and turn it into a lie
spit it out at me
an ultimatum
but that I'm ultimately at fault
and i need to change
when I'm no longer good enough
you close the door on me
seal it shut
leave me with bruised lungs
and a soul that no longer glows anymore.

Undignified Remains

I feel so undignified in your presence
i digress back into a wounded animal you tried domesticating
ensnared in a trap
bleeding and trembling in your presence
shaking lose everything i built up
it falls down my face
and at your feet
you disregard how i feel
sick of my excuses that never change
i thought i changed enough for you but you've given up on me.
i understand
but if you didn't want me anymore
why do you still keep me close but push me out so far
exile me to the farthest corners of my mind
leaving me scouring for the truth
living off of inferences
only observing after
that i'm right
i'm wrong
i should have left when the door was open
but now it's closed
and I'm standing here trapped with you breathing down my neck
foaming criticisms from your mouth
that my honesty is a truth you don't want to face in yourself.

For Your Information

I regret to inform you
that its not my fault
that I'm doing the best i can
with nothing
I'm making something
out of nothing
and your foolish to judge so quick
when you can barely look yourself in the eyes
when you belittle me
i'm holding back natural disasters
that spill from my skin
i let them go when i'm alone
i know no one is coming for me
even though my body is a state of emergency
i lay bloated on the bathroom floor
bathing in my own blood
soaking in a rain
unleashed from this pain
too real to feel in this vessel
i transcend
between a place
somewhere away from here.

Ignorance

Your ignorance

cuts me open and makes my heart bleed

i feel it pushing it's way out of my chest

when you ask horrific questions you think are acceptable

i clutch my chest and am met with my wound opening up

my hands stained

you can't see through your rose tinted glasses

the blood loss on the floor

i stand in front of you haemorrhaging breath

short, shallow breathing

panting

running in my mind

away from this conversation

my thoughts a pack of wolves howling in alarm

telling me to leave somewhere away from this place

away from your ignorance

that makes my heart bleed.

The Discount Bin

Go ahead

discount me

throw me in the bin

for being mentally ill

throw a for sale sign around my neck

tell everyone I'm special

different

delicate

fragile- handle with care

whisper around me

tip toe around the shelf i sit on

strip me of making a meaningful life

just because i'm damaged goods.

Buying Time

I'm just getting help
so i can buy more time
to decide
if its worth living
or not.

I'm Sorry

I'm sorry i'm not ok
that i can't get any better
i'm sorry i keep falling so many steps back
just when i came so far
i'm sorry i make my life look so easy
when really i'm fighting a complex battle
between me, myself and i
i'm sorry i'm not confident
i'm just dealing with a hefty wound
that wont shut.

maybe i should just apologize
for being alive
and do away with me
so i won't have to apologize anymore

i'm so sorry
i wasted your time
and mine
so so sorry i'm still alive
i'm not sorry
once i die
it's for the best.

The Blur

This Fear

I wish i could tell you
how real this fear is
but you don't seem to hear me
the words hang in the air like smoke
dissipates before it reaches you
i feel this fear sit in my head and bloom
into some wound I didn't know I had
it aches with all the attempts i've tried to tell you what makes me scared
but you don't listen and slough me off
i feel the fear take an axe to my neck
trying to severe all the feelings i'm trying to contain inside
but it botulises
becomes a tangled web of lies down my back
that splits me in two
while i sit here and smile at you
some social indication that I'm non-verbally ok
as anxiety tears me to pieces
unaware of how i'm being destroyed
right in front of you.

Invisible Illness

Its been an hour since I got up abruptly
all because my mind couldn't stay quiet long enough to succumb to sleep
i woke up with my heart slamming me against the bed
my body stumbling underneath it
writhing on the bathroom floor
my cheeks kissing the concrete tiles
looking for salvation from this fever
sweeping over my body on fire
my sweat tries to douse the flames
i feel my stomach crawling out of my mouth
as i lay on the floor unable to move
my heavy heart beating me down
as my body takes flight
i feel relief rain over me
as i shiver with dizziness
i get up and go back to bed
like i was never sick
some phantom illness that possessed my body
leaving no indication
that i will ever heal.

Stewing

My stomach is stewing
the stress turning it radioactive
i feel it burning through my skin
i try and breathe
and I feel my stomach turn solid
clench like a fist
crush my body into a can
and leave me on the floor helpless
writhing in pain.

Nausea

I learned how to spell nausea so well
because its all i know
i try not to spill the contents of my stomach
into a porcelain ocean
as i grapple while trying to ride the wave
a sea too choppy for my own liking
i feel it rise
my internal thermometer
meeting a breaking point
only to stay staggered at the top
too stubborn to let it go
i'm left on my knees waiting
for nausea to pass
so i can get on with my day.

This Room

I can't tell you what sets off my body in this room
i don't know why my body doesn't think something isn't right here
i can feel the fog coming for me
my ears are ringing
my eyes glazing over
blurring everything in front of me
i'm blazing hot and the heat rises
i can feel my heart pounding a warning to leave this place
i'm afraid I'm going to swallow my tongue
for real this time
i feel it turn to sandpaper in my mouth
begging for water, holding an ocean of guilt down
i stumble out of my chair and my movement feels so animated
reaching for my coat, phone, medication and peppermint oil
i feel like everyone can tell i'm losing my shit and it makes leaving even more
inevitable
i shuffle through the rows feeling like i'm not going to make it to the door
when i get there i'm unsure how to turn the handle
and i can feel the room looking at me fumble around
i become a wounded animal looking for shelter
from wounds inflicted by someone else
staggering through the hallway looking for fresh air
a pasture to die
i somehow make it down the staircase
into the atrium
i feel so exposed in this crowded place
i make it outdoors somehow
and I close my eyes and finally breathe
feel the burden of the room leaving me
i don't know if i can go back
to a place i cant relax
unaware of how i'm being destroyed
right in front of you.

Purple Panic

I could swallow lavender
let it bloom in my lungs
fill in the cracks in my broken chest
burning with every breath
i can't cough the fire out
my chest burns
i breathe harder
choke on my breath
wheeze out pain and all the things caught in my heart hurting
bleeding out breaths
ghosts and haunted feelings
my chest becomes a shaking fist
bound by ribs.

Origami

I turn my sheets into intricate origami
when my heart slams it's fists into my chest
i lie in bed glued down by gravity
held captive by anxiety
i wish i could be sedated
blur out the feeling
of constant running
running away from everything
while lying perfectly still
who is holding my body hostage?
my mind an avatar trapped inside this body
let me out
let this feeling go away
so i can lay awake to waste
into another day.

Disassociate

I sleep with eyes wide open
the world a spinning film
i can't absorb the colours anymore
the pictures fray past my eyes
i turn my head up to the sun
the light barely passes through
i think i blink
nothing seeps inside
i think i breathe
can't feel the air whisper on my skin
can't feel your fingers sweeping down my arm
maybe if you press a little harder
something will register me out of this
chosen coma
before i slip.

The Bloom

Destroy

You destroyed everything i built up

i sat on my knees in disbelief

wept for weeks

lay my head against the cold cruel world

until i felt empty

delirious with disassociation

i got up and dusted off my body

collected the seeds for tomorrow

and planted a new future.

Spring bones

Shake the snow off your bones

wake up and shimmy through the cracks of sleep

warm up in the light of day

stretch and grow upwards

just as the bulbs do

in anticipation of spring.

Spring of Accomplishment

The trees in the spring
hold bouquets on their branches for me
weighed down by the heaviness
that i've stayed alive another year
knowing the burdens i carry
are only made better
when the flowers come up again.

Birth

My garden gives birth
to tiny miracles wrapped in petals
a permanent rainbow swaying in the wind
my garden gives birth to my heart
the network of veins pulsating beneath the ground
growing to keep me grounded.

My garden gives birth
to my mind
the roots synapses and nerve endings
firing signals to stay alive
my garden gives birth to hope
that i can live another day
to see the seasons through.

Touched by the Fire

I've been burning for so long
never been touched by the flames
until now
i never realized while burning alive
that i could survive
that i could see the other side to the madness
maybe i need to take care of this
and light my purpose on fire
with the fire that burns me too.

Healing

I have to stop
tearing myself apart
because the girl trapped inside
depends on me
to hold myself together
become better
and transform
new again.

Carrying

I am carrying myself
a stillborn child who wanted to grow
wanted to live
i carry her in my womb
the weight i carry for the two of us
stretches my body
breaks the bond between flesh and bone
i can't tell you i'm carrying her between my heart and lungs
without bated breathing leaving my lips
she is a secret i carry
until i can heal myself.

Lonely II

I learn to make loneliness my friend
because its been here so long
and occupied so many spaces in my life
how can i continue to ignore it?
When i walk alone in the city
watch others converse
i remember that i'm not alone
that in a distant future i will have no time to be alone
that the yearning for a place to be will haunt me
bringing me back to the beginning where loneliness and i once met
and i may forget to make it my ally
and let it take over my life
rather than invite it to stay with me
and let me think.

Scars

The scars on my skin are stars
constellations and maps
from a time
when maybe i wasn't so well
and now they slowly fade
to let the light shine through.

Strong

when you finally realize

how strong you are

when you continue to live.

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Miigwetch!

If I missed anyone else, just know I am extremely thankful you are in my life and followed me on this journey.



Photo credit: Riley M. Fortin

Sharin F. Ali is a biracial poet and multimedia artist. Born to an Indo-Filipino father and European-Canadian mother, her unique upbringing heavily influences her work. She currently resides in Surrey, B.C.



Following a long battle with her mental health, Sharin writes about living with depression, anxiety and PTSD. She writes about the pain and loneliness that often follows those with mental health issues with brutal honesty.