

Bedbound

Diaries

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## “Forced to slow down” and creating Bedbound Diaries

I used to be someone caught up in hustle bustle culture, constantly moving to the point my surroundings blurred as I rushed by everything, chasing- I don't know what I was chasing. Chronic illness at first felt like I hit the brakes and wasn't moving. The fatigue weighed me down as if liquid cement ran through my veins. I stumbled to the nearest bench I could find.

A breeze, not the artificial whirlwind from me speeding through life, but a warm breeze that made the trees dance. There were dandelions pushing through the sidewalk cracks. The white and blue streaks in my usual rush were cumulus clouds on a clear day.

Chronic illness by its nature forces me to slow down. Sometimes I contemplate why I call it slowing down when it's simply my pace now, but since this pace strays from productivity standards, the way I navigate the world based on the framework of these standards is considered “slow.”

My eyes dry from having a staring contest with the ceiling and I'm hyperaware of the prickly feeling behind my knees, on my fingertips, and my scalp.

Sometimes I curl up and the light of my life is the one beaming from my phone, connecting me to hundreds of people experiencing the same agony and swapping memes, jokes, and advice in solidarity. When my temples pulse from staring at the phone too long, I end up shakily gripping a pen, startled by when it escapes my fingers, but determined to steer it on paper.

Bedbound Diaries are poems, drawings, and thoughts messily put together during hazy flareups. There is no order or structure, but I gladly invite you to this mess.

What day is it? Everything is a blur



## Haldhi Dhoodh (Turmeric Milk)

9:45 AM

Amma pours the milk with a flourish  
bangles clinking against each other.  
Pungent, earthy aftertaste lingers  
on my tongue.

I sink to the floor

Hold out swollen fingers for inspection  
a warning before pain's thunderous boom reverberates throughout  
my body.

For the rest of the day

My body calcifies

A hulking statue

impossible to defeat

Pain medication swims

In the river of turmeric milk.

Kurtha's heavy beads and sandpaper interior

Scratches my face as I pull it off

Fabric latches to hair

But my limbs are cement blocks

And all my energy expires

I deflate.

1:29 PM

A peppery aroma

Lifts me from unconsciousness

Pots and pans clang downstairs

Pakistani classical music echoes around the house

The singer's ragas and percussions

fuel Amma's personal concert with dishes

The ragas seduce my eyelids shut

4:05 PM

I jolt awake

Torpid and lost in a thick haze

clawing through the milky web that shrouds my mind

Downstairs,

loud cheers and hoots erupt from Amma and Abba

Cricket broadcaster's commentary

faint and overpowered by Amma and Abba

chanting and clapping.

6:10 PM

A spice-laden fragrance overpowers the room

Saran-wrapped plate and mug wait

expectantly on the bedside table

My tremors rock the plate

stiff fingers struggle to grasp the samosa

Teeth sink into the crumbling crust

Potato filling falls in a hurried escape.

I limp to the bathroom

One thorny step in front of another

with the mug

Dump its contents into the sink

Stare at the swirl of the golden galaxy

Disappearing into the drain.

Haldhi dhoodh is not a cure

## Salah (translation: Prayer)

Shrouded in darkness  
My depression seeks solitude in salah (prayer)

Allah Hu Akbar (translation: God is Great)  
Hands lift to my ears and then  
fold like layered petals on my chest

Whisper Surah Al-Fatihah (translation: "The Opener." It's the first chapter of the Quran)

Bow on the floor  
Recite three times  
Subhana Rabbi Al Ala (Glory be to Allah My Lord, the Most High)  
Subhana Rabbi Al Ala  
Subhana Rabbi Al Ala

Hands lift up  
A channel to communicate  
to the Creator  
O Allah  
You control the heavens  
And the earth  
And everything in between  
O Allah  
Rip the blanket of darkness off me  
Breathe peace into my lungs  
Plunge your fist into my heart  
So it can beat again



Allah take  
away the  
pain

Shapeshifter- explaining chronic pain to my 10-year-old sibling

Pain  
a shape shifter  
some days it's small  
a fruitfly resting on a giant's palm  
some days it's the giant  
its fingers clench to form a fist  
crushing the fruitfly

and on those nights  
the giant dips me in fire  
it pokes my kneecaps  
shakes me like a bell  
cracks me open like an egg  
it drags me  
a ragdoll  
tucks me into bed  
orders me to sleep  
how can I sleep?

sun rises  
the giant picks up my body  
limbs dangle  
it holds my arms  
guides me to walk  
it lets go  
cramp, spasm, numb  
collapse

the white coats  
gifted me a stick  
the giant knocks it away  
stomps on me  
till all is left are crumbs

it tries to connect me together  
faulty circuit  
mismatched wires  
misfiring  
pain in sparks

it stretches me like fabric  
poking its knitting needle  
into me  
and weaves thorns into my fibers

the giant inflates me like a balloon  
then drains me  
inflates me again  
pop

two months later  
the fruitfly lands on my wrist  
the giant walks away





## Brain Not Found

I dropped my brain

it broke

Shoes crunch shattered

glass

Each shard a fragmented

thought

A painful jigsaw

puzzle

Just connect

the pieces

I connect the pitiful

pieces

with bare hands

Glass scrapes

across the floor

scurrying to assemble a syllable

Forming an opaque snow

globe

Not a sliver of thought could

penetrate

Neurotypicals

Their thoughts and words are rosary beads

strung together steadily

each bead thrumming like light rain on windows

How do they sink their fingers into porous clay

and mold perfection?

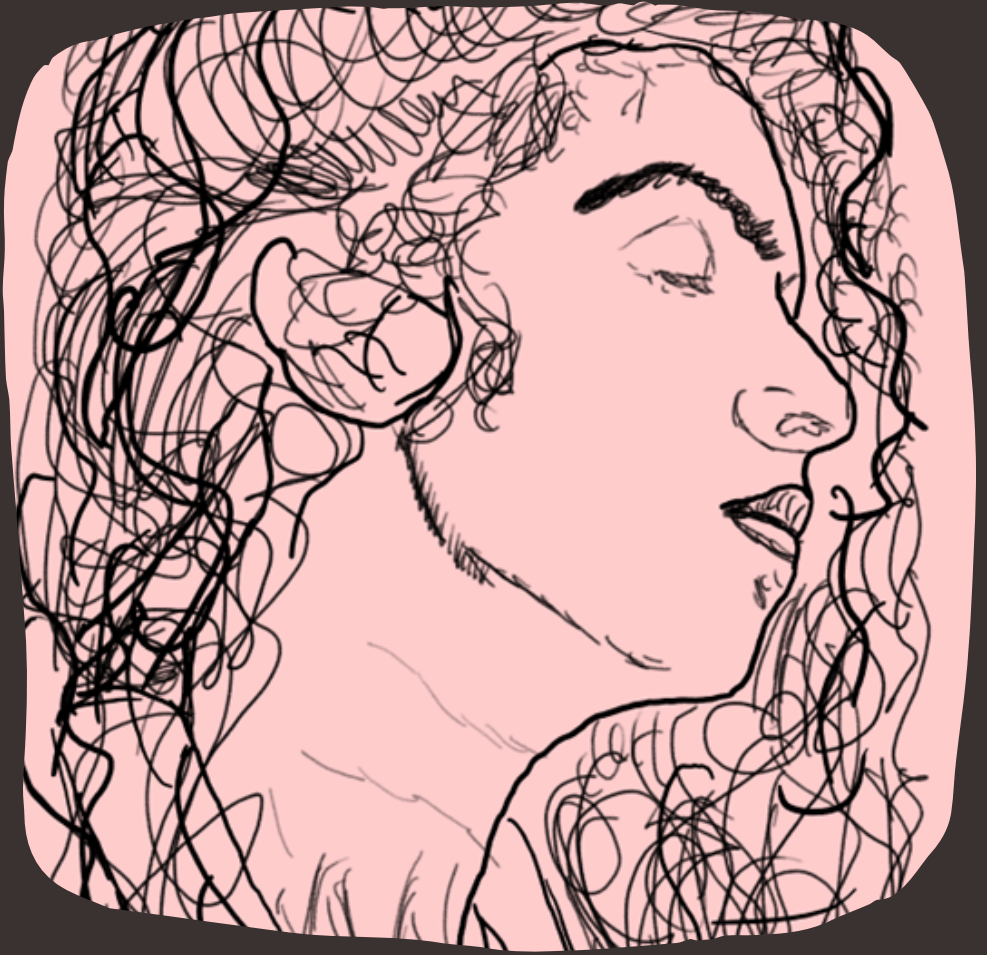
While my words are

the

clamor and clangor of

broken

dishes



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