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
0 Allah
You control the heavens
And the earth
And everything in between
0 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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