

## **Know Thyself**

### **Survivor Hands**

Wide, strong, and durable fingernails

for sewing the clothing of Nazis in Jewish labor camps.

Nails for staying alive.

Later, her fingers grew with calluses

after sewing up hand-me downs and toy dolls for her children.

Yet, her hands remain soft and warm

from kneading challah dough,

and the scent of cinnamon never fully dissolves

from frequently pushing the heels of her hands into strudel.

Rough, cracked skin, hardly exposed to hand lotion

but instead to a constant supply of antiseptic gel from the Intensive Care ward of the hospital where her husband lay.

Ghostly, uncared for hands

kept indoors for no sun to lavish them with warmth and vitamin D, being punished for ever letting go of her husband's hand in the hospital.

Restless hands

flipping through grocery store catalogs, pointing at pictures of produce she will never purchase.

Shaky hands

searching for the consoling grasp from another, the best thing next to her husband.

### **Forgiveness**

You may wonder why I wonder.

You may question why I question.

You may not see what I see.

You may not lead the life I lead.

You breathe the air I breathe because we are human, one life, one prophecy.

You may object to what I believe in.

You may give up where I fight.

We can learn to live as equals.

We are brothers and sisters, very much on the same plight.

Where I see black, you may see white.

What I find spoiled, you may find ripe.

Where I cry in agony, you may back away in fright.

You may challenge all my conclusions.

You may separate me from my dreams.

When all is said and done, I forgive you, but don't expect an apology.

### **When I Write**

When I write, sometimes I dig deep.

Sometimes, the words come from the surface, pouring over out of me like boiling water pouring over a pan on a stove top when the water is way at the tippy top and the pan's cover is placed on top.

The words are always hot, filled with steam, energy, movement, and life.

It may be invisible to the naked eye, but this form of life is wild, free, filled with endless emotion. Like a lion tamer, I tame my emotions, or they will devour me and engulf my logic and reason.

### **My Heart Beats For Everybody**

My heart beats for everybody because I'm anxious,

Anxious to live,

To live every moment with no expectations, no guilt, no shame,

Yet, to live with purpose, meaning, conviction, ease, tenderness, and practice.

Living is a practice.

There is no final exam.

There are more pop quizzes than one might initially expect, but the only final exam is the made up one inside your worrisome mind that makes you believe there is a final exam.

I know this through experience.

I know this because I've been on a journey, a mission, if you will, to live by truth, by what my gut, my instinct, tells me is truth.

I believe in and live by truth with the same innate tendency that lets me live with love and follow my heart.

Sure, I've had pain and misfortunes, like everybody, or most people, but, just remember and hold dear and close to you that light is more powerful than dark, and that rings true for human thought and feeling too.

Love, compassion, and acceptance are more powerful than hate, jealousy, and even rage.

### **What I Don't Want**

I don't want to be someone who is usually alone, watching other people have all the fun and living their dreams.

I don't want to be the black sheep and scapegoat of my family, being labeled the "sick" one and taking the blame for other's problems. I've got my own problems. I don't need yours.

I don't want to be "just a girl" and treated like I have a handicap because I don't have a penis.

I don't want to be emotionally and/or psychologically abused. Life is too short, fleeting, and precious, and that trauma does nothing but leave damage, sadness, anger, and the feeling of an empty, unloved or unappreciated soul.

I don't want to be deprived unconditional love from others and myself.

I don't want to be deprived support or compassion from others and myself.

I don't want to be prejudged or judged too soon by the color of my skin or the curls in my hair or the shape of my face, or the way I speak, or the fact that I have a vagina.

I don't want to be lied to or cheated.

I don't want to be smothered by other people who don't realize that I am more than fully capable of taking care of myself and that I have everything I need inside me and at my fingertips and the tip of my tongue.

I don't want anyone to feel ashamed of who they are or who they want to become.

I don't want these things I just mentioned to sound strange or revolutionary or taboo because too much pain and not enough living is the result of that.

I'm here for a reason, and that reason is to live fully, not to half-ass it.

I wholeheartedly believe that if I lived in a world where I didn't have to endure what I mentioned to you earlier, there would be infinitely more possibilities and outcomes, including more joy, peace, and feelings that haven't ever been felt or created yet.

I believe in this moment.

I believe in myself.

I believe in you.

Thank you.