

*Fading Out*

**Anxiety**

I felt a sting of dread  
As the people piled in.

Standing lopsided, they turned their heads  
And pointed with their chins.

Their frigid glares crept from everywhere  
They filled me up with placid pity,  
and awkwardly sicken stares.

I felt a cringe.  
A cold-sweat clasp,  
clinched at all my cares.

I stepped back, up against the wall.  
Hid in the corner, where darkness falls.

My hands so clammy.  
My mind so blazed.  
I flinched and chuckled  
Stuck in my daze.

Nowhere to sit.  
No friends around.  
The urge to split.  
I realized I had no movement,  
Only muted sound.

## **Abort perMission**

I'm told it's my choice.  
That this life is mine.  
That I am a God  
Terraforming cells inside myself.

But they never said how hard it is.  
How looks from your friends  
Make you feel stripped.  
Your filthy soul there for everyone.

“What's wrong?”  
“Are you sick?”  
Yes. I am sick.  
Sick of myself.

Tired of pretending to live a life  
That is not mine.  
So I lied to them, “I have appendicitis.”  
I lied and put them far away from me.

Hoping that one day they would forget.  
That I would forget.  
Forget love.  
Forget forever.

Forget about the shame  
Stamped on my soul.  
Letters shifted through so many hands  
Ending journeys when someone else would open up.

They didn't tell me that my mom  
Would spew out words,  
Slashing my nerves,  
Like the Devil's tongue,

“You little bitch!”  
I still see the rage seeping out of her mouth.

Not being able to make eye contact  
Because nothing twisted you up more than her eyes in yours.

Tell me who I am.  
How does this change me?  
I can't do this without you.  
That's what I used to think.

That we were all puzzles  
Trying to fit together  
And feel complete.  
That it took two to be one.

Now I don't know.  
Because you left...  
I bet one for the other.  
I'm a loser.

That's what my stepdad used to call my mom  
If she couldn't find something.  
He would say, "Why are you such a loser?"  
And then he would laugh like a child,

Boisterously, and yet you knew  
He was only somewhat joking.  
Do we ever stop acting like children?  
Will I too burn

The ones I care about  
Because I can't control the fires  
I started on my own?  
I know I want to curl up

So tightly that I disappear.  
I don't want anyone to see me.  
They may see too much.  
They will see what they want to.

Am I allowed to want too?

“You’ll be a great mother one day.”  
I get told often  
Here in the deep south.

Twenty-seven is a bit too late  
To start thinking about children.  
That’s something most began in their teens.  
It’s just how it’s always been with my family.

Has-been teens raising more  
Aspiring dreams.  
People yearning to be seen by God.  
Praying that their children’s sins aren’t because of them.

How do you know I would make a good mother?  
Is it because I am a kind person?  
Because I can make you laugh?  
That I know how to cook decent meals?

Then tell me I am good at those other things.  
Because I know I could not be that  
Idyllic creature.  
Eleven years doesn’t seem long enough.

Don’t tell me to become something  
Then penalize me  
When you only showed me nothings.  
No money, no food, no new clothes, no birthdays.

Free lunches, holidays from charities, how to hide under the bed,  
When to run to get help, what food to look for  
When digging through the dumpsters, who should be the look-out,  
That it’s okay to have kids young as long as you get married.

That it’s best to blend in.

If you stick out you’ll get hit harder.  
But you were supposed to tell me how to live.

How to be an adult.  
But we only see the name of those before us

Before it's too late.  
I always knew you were Frankenstein  
But I had to find out on my own  
That I am the monster.

And that so many give me  
Your name because what they see  
From me is only a reflection  
From you.

How is it right  
That you can call us murderers?  
But you never thought to ask,  
"What is it that murdered her?"

## Once Spoken

Don't live with regrets,  
Just live with the proof.

If I had a dying wish  
I'd like to be aloof.

Because being interested  
Leaves a pain too thirsty to quench.

And my mouth becomes rusty, along with my words.  
They apparently offend and reek of a stench.

It really doesn't matter.  
Because my thoughts are thick, and sweet, like cake batter.

But when my brain bakes my thoughts into words  
No one has an appetite to devour what's heard.

And so my thoughts slowly drip out.  
They splatter and shout.

They become moldy and green  
Because my words cannot be seen.

I eat them too often.  
Telling myself they'll lead me to my coffin.

So many of them rot.  
Often spoken but never sought.

## Atlas

Eyes so heavy  
Like the humid air  
On a hot, Alabama, summer day.  
A firecracker pelt, made of sweat,  
Bumbling down skin.  
Eyes that ache  
Like Grandma's knees  
Right before it's supposed to pour.  
Eyes cracking bones with a look,  
Breaking apart in the absence  
Of the sun.

Words don't hurt.  
They only kill you.  
Drowning your heart  
Like the lake she tried to bury us in years ago.  
But we're not going to talk about that.  
Like so many things in our family.  
It happened and things happen.  
"But so many others have it worse in the world.  
You're not the only one that suffers. And others  
Hurt more than you have."  
That's what you always say to me.  
What you've drilled into my sister's core.

She only talks about cheap jewelry.  
But she twists it around in her hands,  
Between the needle-like bones  
We call fingers,  
Like it's a treasure.  
She gives everything away.  
So glad to see us smile  
At the fools gold gifts.

We are fools.  
People who force things too much  
Often are.

Like the teeth that escape  
Out the cracks of our  
Tightly strung up mouths  
Tied to our cheeks.

Such a wonderful act.  
To eat and laugh.

“They told me you overdosed...”  
But my words are empty  
To your mind.  
A mind like a closet  
Too full of clothes.  
When you speak,  
It’s as though you’re blindfolded  
Reaching in and grabbing at  
Whatever your hands feel  
Making sentences like mismatched outfits.  
Never knowing that it looks out of place.  
But to everyone else, it’s so obvious.

It’s harder to breathe in the summertime.  
So much moisture in the air.  
It feels as though you’re being choked by God.  
The air is so thick  
Your lungs can’t filter it through.  
Deep breathes  
Go a long way.  
Right down into your stomach  
Where the intestines compete  
To tie cherry stems.

And you wonder why  
It hasn’t rained yet?  
Why your eyes feel  
Like a toddler’s four hour  
Old diaper,  
But you’re not sure



If it needs changing.  
Maybe it's dry.  
Maybe it's not going to rain after all.  
But now the toads are howling  
Liaison's to one another.  
And the sun has set.  
Maybe it won't rain...  
The weather is fickle here.  
Sometimes you won't be able to see the stars  
Just nubilous skies full of cloudy intentions.

## **Roses Again**

I'm bathing in roses again.  
Velvet red.  
Arms Overhead.  
I pretend I'm dead.

What was it you mumbled?  
I can't recall.  
Why do our hearts become so jumbled?  
The world says I'm small.

I'm bathing in roses again.  
Veins of aubergine.  
Dreams of gin.  
Here I am queen.

What was it I wanted to be?  
Things happen so fast.  
Now a distant memory.  
But even those do not last.

I'm bathing in roses again.  
Petals crinkled in rust.  
Sweat bubbles on my skin  
As I wither to dust.