

- distance

there are days where we sit alone on our beds  
in the same positions but in different time zones  
we both notice that wrenching in our stomachs  
aware it's due to the other tugging on the string  
that seems to bind us across the sea and sky

we are unable to reach out and touch our skin  
like we used to do when our bodies lay side by side  
to smell the breath of one another and want to taste it  
where our fingers would trace our contours without seeing  
we would drift into a dream each at our own pace but together

to experience that now is an unusual luxury  
one we are not blessed enough to sustain  
we are left in the cold to touch ourselves  
and to caress our own trembling figures  
an attempt to replicate the others brush  
there is no sanctuary for us anymore

each space has been defiled by a new memory  
with every living moment destroying the last  
until those hours within each other are replaced  
with another's face and laugh moulding the future  
that we had envisioned as only ours to hold tight  
where we become each others story of the past

- a different kind of feeling

It's a different kind of feeling,  
it shows itself in the sunshine,  
when the other faces are smiling,  
it hits the strongest then.

It's always there in the background,  
in the back of your throat,  
whenever you're trying to hold a conversation.

It's noticeable in the kitchen, right by the sink, sitting on the tiled bench.

It's there in the shower,  
where the water hides it,  
attempting to drown it,  
disguised too well it slips down the drain.

There's no way to run from it,  
it follows at a gradual pace,  
it catches up sometimes and hits from behind,  
with dull weapons that bruise but never break the skin.

The bruises build up over time,  
never quite healing,  
purple hues become the new skin tone,  
until the mirror no longer recognises its reflection.

It makes the bed cold to touch,  
like a foreign object in your home,  
it's out of place but becomes unnoticeable over time.

When the music is too loud it screams louder,  
it's almost ear piercing, but you sing and laugh,  
trying to muffle its cries,  
hiding it, before anyone else notices its wails.

It's an unwanted guest, who won't leave,  
no matter how many times you ask politely.  
It lurks around the corners of your sanctuary,  
causing you to fear yourself.

It's a different feeling,  
one that lingers and follows,  
until you're left with the shell of who you were.

- strange to think about

It's strange to think about,  
how we replace those  
we once held in our hand,  
when we knew their freckles better than our own.

We all seem to be seeking justification,  
for those decisions,  
that defied who we thought we were.

How quickly we drift from the past to the future,  
whilst continuously looking back,  
comparing and contrasting  
what we knew as fact  
and what we hope to discover.

We're too impatient to feel a smile,  
trying to bury the hole  
they started digging that afternoon.

There is a never a pause.

It washes over us,  
in a stifled breath,  
Too distracted to realise our craving  
has come and gone with the wind.

Yet in the hours we watch them,  
slipping into a realm,  
behind a door, locked from the inside.

- grade two

He cornered you,  
your six year old bodies were the same height.  
Those baby blues, eye level to your murky browns.  
But he was a boy and you were a girl.

The punches hit you on the shoulder at first,  
then your stomach,  
then your arms  
and then your legs.  
Your throat closed in on itself,  
but your heart continued to race.  
You felt like a bug - trapped  
in the corner before the final swat.

You heard giggles and snickers from around the corner,  
his pale face and frosted hair blocked your view.  
But you caught a glimpse of your best friend forever,  
before she ran, away.  
The other two, with their pink headbands  
kept giggling and cheering him on.

He grabbed your wrists,  
pinning them above your head.  
Drawing back, you lurched forward.  
Your school shoes were brand new and hard,  
your left foot collided with his right shin,  
he squealed and fell over.  
He yelled at you, something hurtful,  
but you ignored him and made your escape,  
running past those silent, frozen girls.

He started it, you plead to your teacher.  
She shook her head and kept writing in that red book.

But you retaliated, she sighed, your name goes in too.

It wasn't because you were in pain,  
or angry,  
or frustrated,  
or sad,  
you were crying because you got in trouble.  
your spotless record was tarnished,  
because the boy who liked you,  
decided to show you,  
by hurting you.

Your best friend forever said she was jealous,  
that he liked you and not her.  
It was a puzzle you hadn't put together yet.  
The ache in your shoulders confused your pride,  
no one understood your frustrations,  
not even your mum or dad.

- looking back

my childhood is tainted now  
now that I know what was going on  
between you and him  
now that I'm a woman  
and understand the concept of power  
and money and promises  
and their role in our gender

he's still my dad  
but you're the one  
I want to be when I grow up  
you're so strong  
not just as a mother  
or a woman  
but as a human  
who drew the short straw

everything you've endured  
from your family violence  
to the death of the one  
who moulded your character  
and the manipulation  
you tolerated for far too long

I used to admire your love  
the honesty you shared  
appeared ideal to everyone but you  
you thought everything  
had been laid out on the table  
until the things he had hidden  
fell onto the ground  
scattered but clear  
as we all stood frozen  
staring at the evidence

the truth is shattering  
my image of him  
is now warped  
as every memory has another meaning  
lurking beneath the surface  
nostalgic photos make me sick  
when I think of the pain  
you were hiding behind that lens  
the fact I didn't see it  
or just chose to ignore it  
always taking his side

defending him blindly  
because I thought I was mature  
and understood  
but I realise now I had no idea  
I'm sorry for that  
you deserved more  
but I get it now  
and I'm not letting him hurt you again  
his power is futile here