



TWENTY

A POETRY BOOK

Ty

This is a collection of feelings, thoughts, emotions malformed into poetry.

I don't expect everyone to understand; i don't understand.

Black

Born black like I was burning
with rage from the womb
against the pain my parents' parents'
parents' parents' parents' parents
felt on a plantation, planting cane
to provide a white plantocracy with wealth
but never collecting a cent, cows valued more
than our lives back then, sold and bought,
transported, put to work for too many years
before the mass thought they were wrong.
Born black, lived black for twenty years
so much has changed for our race
so much is changing way too late,
black skin is not a sin, black skin is golden,
twenty years seeing black women marginalized
especially by their fellow black guys, a 'male gaze'
that has materialized a whole person
into what's between their thighs.
Now women rise, so no girl has to say me too
to being abused, harassed or mistreated by guys
boys growing up starting to realize women are more
than breasts and thighs, though it took us more
than twenty years to realize we've been fed lies
by misogynistic, sexists who'll never earn
the appreciation of women; woman; my mother
abused at the hand of a man for far too long,
my sister slapped into silence, a rage burning
black.
We're all black for reparation, but not
repatriation, because African 'mud huts'
too small for our egos

A cross-section of 2015's coping mechanisms

Music the only remedy to my malady
each dawn to dusk filled with dread; dreading
the lonely hours that followed; dusk till dawn.
Sleep, a refuge skilled at escaping my reach,
when found, a holder of horrid night terrors
that would stir me awake with sweat
as I pondered the palpitations and pimples protruding,
anxiety's agents acting upon a battered body
housing a mauled mind, hardly holding together.
The pink and blue saunter silently with the sunset
revealing a blue so dark it seemed black.
Gone the reflected green of trees,
gone the crowing chickens that scampered about,
just my cat left, purring as he rubs his abdomen over my leg,
insects having to run before his right paw grants them death
his dark gray fur finding it easy to hide as he dashes
like a monster in the night; my only friend.
Couldn't escape the dreams of falling into darkness
and drowning, couldn't help but isolate myself.
Bukowski told me isolation was a gift but I don't believe it
when I nearly killed myself in isolation, and no one
would've known why.

An Artist Drowning

Sometimes I feel like an artist drowning
I see myself on a boat, beginning to brave the waters
carrying cargo frailer than it's wooden frame,
me being too tired to trudge the earth,
too frail to fight the depression depreciating my mind.
I'd row carefully, like a brush stroke
as I maneuver the boat to the middle of the muddy lake.

Surveying the scenery I see no one to save me,
I unbutton my shirt, tread to the bow,
and step into the blue, my body breaks the waves ,
involuntarily my body begins to battle for air,
hands scratch at the surface desperate to secure oxygen
but my mind ready to say goodbye, I open
my mouth as if to consume the lake,
water races into my respiratory system,
each burning breath I take takes a bit of my life
and I sink into the water, forgotten
an artist drowning
as asthma dooms me to death
but never parting from my art

Anxiety

There's a ball building in my chest
beside my heart, it beats like a marching band
just a bit slower than the beat of my heart
but it's waxing, the waiter wants to take my order
but I can't reply, too many choices
not enough time, but how do I tell him
to talk to the other tables for a while.
There's a beautiful woman waiting for the date to start
but all these questions keep swirling around
I don't like how any of them sound
so I say nothing, now time passes like a snail
and the ball beats like a bat out of hell
strapped to my chest, the waiter comes back
I can tell he's annoyed, I say chicken
she orders the same. She asks if I fancy fried chicken
and a bomb drops, I don't know if she means just the food
or is it a trick question I can't deduce, I don't know,
I tell her yes, she says me too,
maybe we could get chicken and fries some other time
she says she'd like that, that part went well,
but what next, I don't know, I rattle my brain
hoping for a topic to fall out
and the ball keeps building and beating,
thank God, the waiter comes.
We eat but the silence deafens me
I wanna say so many things
but it feels like the wrong time, so I keep my mouth shut.

Knuckles

Cracked my knuckles on a concrete wall,
almost cried as the pain waxed up my wrist,
easier to fend off tears than fight the demons
furling around the forests of my mind
fearing they'd find the fruits I laboured to grow
as I grieved about the grueling end to another
loveless adventure, one I swore would survive
the storms. My hand useless, I sat in a corner
the tears crested my cheeks and collapsed onto the carpet.
Why can't I just communicate how I feel?
Why do I complicate every concept?
My hand is swollen, sore, my self-loathing insatiable,
more tears have found the ground,
I digress, I distance myself into loneliness
as I try to form phrases that explain feelings
but in the end nothing gets said.
Cold water ran across my hand as it throbbed,
a structure solidifying in its current state; unmovable.

Alone

I've heard there's satisfaction is solitude
Charles said it, with different diction
I decide to reduce the dedicated hours to sleep
I don't need eight, I can use more of the twenty four.
brooding on my absence from my bed, bored
into manic depression, hysteria or worse-
a gnawing numbness drifting into my dreams-
nightmares, alone.

I watched my friends fall apart, while my arm
stretched across to catch them but failed.

Blood Brother

Pale light passes through a window pane,
curtained to keep away an unkind coldness
carried by unwanted winter rains,
the air hangs of illness, a brother by law
covered neck to toe in sheets to keep away
the cold, bulky arms atrophied to only bones
once boasting a lion's laugh, only a frail echo
a kidney corrupted into catastrophe,
cheek bones cast haunting shadows
as cheeks are left hollow,
eyes filled with a familiar fire but the body
looks smaller in a similar sweater.
I would've paid you a parting hug
if I knew it would be our last conversation,
I would've thanked you for being a brother,
better than any blood brother I have.
May you sleep in peace wherever you go.

Hibiscus Avenue

Painted aquamarine with red doors
our new house standing like a giant to four year old me.
Four year old me and my two year old sister
running through fever grass and picking hibiscuses
until we had to go to school
a walk we had grown to dread.
Carving our crayon drawings into brown walls
the drawings always getting higher.

Eight years old and in grade three
asking the hibiscus if she loved me
or she loved me not, but it was lust
filling my fast growing heart.
My six year old sister content
to play with the rabbits we had bought
as they hopped from side to side
of their small home, feeding them too much
grass lay on the ground of their home.

Re-painting the house at twelve years old,
removing any remnants of the decay that had descended,
repairing the black spots that emerged from roasting breadfruit,
they had reappeared when I was sixteen, set to graduate
high school and step into sixth form while my sister
entered grade ten, two grades behind me but just as smart.
At sixteen I brought my first girl home, grilled by my mother,
my father providing an approving nod.
Moving out at eighteen, to a university dorm,
my sixteen year old sister says she'll miss me
but the house shows signs of decay
as the floorboard cracks with my steps
and some things can't be hid by any amount of paint.
Kingston streets burn always with the summer's heat
but I learn to get used to it, my father calls weekly
checking if I'm good, I'm good, even when I'm not.

But there are no stars in Kingston, so I travel back
to Hibiscus Avenue every once in a while.

Jimmy's Poem

A plant; a friend; a son,
dying, not for a lack of sun
but for an overload of water;
overfed, a father's fault,
a father finding it hard to carry
the guilt that lay across his shoulders.
Rosemary's scent travelling in a bag
from St. Mary to Kingston,
a journey survived
to die from too much water
can't shake the thought of drowning.

Blood

My blood was born on the banks of the Nile,
my blood learned how to conquer the wild,
my blood learned how to till the soil,
my blood was sold to the whites as a child,
my blood was that of the kings and queens of the East,
now the East is hungry while the West has a feast,
you don't need to be blind to smell that the world is now faeces,
they say that world is round but it's still full of so many creases,
people escaping fate, but you can't escape God until it is too late,
too late, too late, the world is in a state,
of disrepair, who can fix it?
everybody wants somebody else to fix it.

my blood was sold like cattle,
just like that, sold into chattel,
my blood was forced into battle,
a white man's war
but we died on the battlefield,
you can't feel how I feel.
If my blood stayed on the African plains
maybe we would have designed the first plane,
maybe Wakanda could have been real,
maybe Western Civilization would have been in the East,
maybe this world would have peace,
maybe Earth wouldn't be dying piece by piece,
but my blood, my words, will just blow away with the breeze.

Second Infinite

Every second infinite,
the one star in the night's sky
can't be seen,
the only cure to your current ache
can't be found,
a bullet to a beating heart
that can't help but break,
the last manatee on Earth searching for
a mate, muted by the music
you make; a way to feel
for people who don't know how
to show how they feel.
Every second infinite; but you wait
every missed moment a millenium

Sleep

It's like an internal scream
that scratches the surface, trying to escape
but cannot, as everyone looks on
seeing a shell, inside a fire burning
passers-by only smelling smoke,
on occasion asking the source
never searching harder,
sadness masking depression,
a door no one learns to open
is useless; I am trapped in darkness
on the other side, wanting to die,
and death's cousin is sleep,
so for now, I sleep.



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