

When it Hurts to Breathe

Copyright © 2023 by Sheena.

All rights reserved.

**No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form
without written permission from the publisher or author,
except as permitted by U.S. copyright law.**

ISBN: 978-1-0882-1770-2

For me

When it Hurts to Breathe

Sheena

When it Hurts to Breathe

the grieving and groveling

Sheena

*"I really miss you sheena, it is painful.
I am going to write you a letter to your mailbox
like you did a couple months ago"*

you never did send me a letter
and I spent the next three weeks
obsessively checking my mailbox
before finally letting go
and promising myself to never let your
mind games win ever again

you never did write me a letter
but I went on to write a book
and then some

When it Hurts to Breathe

someone must have snuck in
to the chambers of our hearts
in the middle of the night
and switched out the puzzle pieces
that connected our souls
in this perfect piece
because at dawn
we wake up and discover
that we are no longer compatible

Sheena

look outside your window
it is a full moon tonight
just like that summer night
a couple of years ago
on my birthday
when we had our first kiss
by the jersey waterfront
and altered our dynamic forever

When it Hurts to Breathe

spoiler alert -

we were not strong enough to make it
we do not get a happy ending in this story

Sheena

my tears
blended with my ink
to flawlessly
draft and create
every single letter in
every single word on
every single page
of this book

When it Hurts to Breathe

my love language
could not possibly have been physical touch
because you left
but it is my soul, not my body, that is starved

*you know i love you right?
yes but love is not enough*

maybe love was not enough for us
maybe love does not conquer all
maybe we should have just stayed strictly friends
maybe I never should have gotten so fascinated by you
maybe we should never have found each other attractive
maybe love was not enough

but darling, what if love was enough?

When it Hurts to Breathe

you knew I was
still healing from
the other people who had
walked out of my life

you knew I have a hard time
moving on from loss
because of how much energy and love
I had put into those relationships

so you could more than imagine
how desolate I would be
and utterly devastated
if you, of all people, walked out;
but you did anyway

no one tells you what the first week
or even just the first four days
really feel like

every single minute of each day
of that first week is torment
it is loud and overbearing but also quiet and deafening
it is emotional and fragile but also numb and denial
it is betrayal and taking back your trust in one fell swoop

the first week is exactly like this
the mirror you once used to see yourself through
shatters abruptly into a million little fragments
and you sit for a while just registering the effects.
then you go to pick up the pieces one at a time
when the smallest shard cuts your skin
and you are bleeding all over from a
seemingly small cut
that you did not see coming

at least that is exactly what my
first couple of days felt like

When it Hurts to Breathe

what do you do when
he thinks liking you is enough
and just the same as loving you?

Sheena

the tears would not stop flowing
the pain would not subside
my scars would not start healing
my lungs would not expand properly

I would have sold my soul in a heartbeat
if that would put me out of this misery

When it Hurts to Breathe

beautiful boy,
you made a garden of my body -

planting seeds all over
that bloomed with every
shower of love -

but now that you are gone
the petals in my collarbone
are beginning to wilt
and only my tears,
streaming steadily down my face,
bring them back to life

Sheena

closure is not a real concept
or at the very least is overrated
this is what I have come to convince myself of
anytime I think of us and how we ended

it felt abrupt but also like a slow burn
it was blindsiding but intentional too
we did not get to have that last conversation
or say our goodbyes
we did not know the last time would be the last time
we did not know we were going to become strangers
and that we will not be in each others lives forever

we would never get back together
under the pretense of closure
I would never really know what happened
when you were away
and would probably always have varying encounters
of what really happened
you would never know exactly how awful
you made me feel those last few weeks
when you treated me so remarkably bad

worst of all
I have to live with the fact that
we would never be friends or
laugh together again

we would never have closure

When it Hurts to Breathe

he played house
with you and your body
while you made him
your home

for the longest time
I did not know what I wanted
or maybe I did but just
did not realize I did
or that I was deserving.
but now, after our chaotic ending
I am no longer in a haze
and I know now what I want

I want the commitment
and the security and the peace [of mind]
the reciprocity and a requited type of love
the late night conversations and
random texts during the day
to be able to let go of the mind games and overthinking
I want someone that wants me

I am never going to get any of these from you
and that is okay
because at least now I know what I want
even if it is not you

When it Hurts to Breathe

your betrayal
envelops me
like a rich tapestry
and it would take
months to fully unravel
each thread

Sheena

I want to tell you all about
my deepest darkest fantasy

I am in my apartment
on a random wednesday evening
watching Criminal Minds reruns
when I hear a knock on my front door
I have no idea who it is and I am not expecting anyone
I reluctantly walk to my door and there you are
standing on my doormat *right there*
suddenly my heart beats a lot faster
and my hands begin to shake
and there is this loud silence in my head
that makes me forget to breathe
I open up my door and just stare
I have no idea what to say and apparently
neither do you.
finally I step aside and let you in
you tell me you could not let that be how we ended
you apologize for just showing up
but explain that you could not help it
and you so desperately want to fix this
no matter what it would take
secretly I smile
and we live together happily ever after

but I have moved out of my old apartment
and you do not have my new address or
access to me anymore
guess that is why it is called a fantasy

When it Hurts to Breathe

as this lifetime ends
and I let my mind linger
a few moments longer
I suddenly see it as clear as day.
our connection was like
a wicker basket expected to solve a drought crisis -
unrealistic and always destined to fail

Sheena

you held me
extremely tight
that last morning
in my bed
and did not want to let go

now I cannot help
but wonder
if you knew all along
that the last time
was the last time

When it Hurts to Breathe

~~hi my love,~~
~~I miss you.~~
~~come back to me?~~

never mind.

Sheena

who hurt you?

him; the one who was
my favorite person
and whom I loved the most, did

When it Hurts to Breathe

you said you envied me
and my nonchalant ways
you said you wanted to be just like me,
devoid of emotions and feelings.
I guess you missed the part
where you had always been my one exception

you said you wanted to be as toxic as I was
which did not make sense
because you are arguably one of the best at that

you cradled my arm
and kissed my scars
when they were still raw and fresh
so I had thought
you would at least wait
until my scars had completely healed
before you left me
and created new ones in your wake

When it Hurts to Breathe

I fell for you
not once but twice

you broke my heart
not once but twice

I grovel with the ghost of you
because that is all I am left with

I make excuses for you
and you are not even here

I imagine all my potential replies
if you ever do reach out to me
but none of it matters because
you do not care enough to try

how pathetic is it
to keep fighting for someone
who only treated you as a
convenience and an
afterthought

When it Hurts to Breathe

you told me
on that one night
when we had both been drinking
that if this was a year or two ago
we would have been together
and not just playing it by ear.

I have never sobered up so fast.

did everyone around you
start telling you when you were just a little boy
that you were going to grow up to be a heartbreaker
that your looks would be the downfall of many girls
that your smile would light an aching desire in
everyone you come across

*did anyone around you
ever tell you
that you were going to hurt me the way you did*

When it Hurts to Breathe

if I had thought
about it long enough
I would have imagined
the sinking feeling
of your absence
and swallowed my emotions
right back down -
anything to have gotten you to stay

I would rip through my skin
and watch my blood
flow through the cracks
hoping my blood eventually
dries and stops my soul
from seeping out

When it Hurts to Breathe

in the moment
ours is that of fairytales and
the feeling of prayers finally answered

in the moment
ours is such an achingly beautiful feeling
that almost hurts to explain or utter

but we can only live in the moment for so long
before the sun finally sets and
the darkness overwhelms us.
so as nightfall envelopes all around me
I would sit on a lonesome stone by the fire
with the sounds of crickets as my only companion
and the moon as my light and guide
as I begin to write the story of us
because this story deserves to be written
and read by hopeless romantics and cynics alike
and melted into the spine of something tangible ~
the story of us
becoming forever immortal

Sheena

the little girl
I was when
I fell in love with you
would definitely be
surprised
we ever even
made it this far
in the first place

When it Hurts to Breathe

the weight
of all the things left unsaid
bears impossibly heavy
on my lungs
and keeps me up at night

can you see it?
all the potential of what we could have, should have,
would have been

can you smell it?
my very essence lingering in and on every
single thing you own, even long after I am gone

can you taste it?
just how bland your life is going to get now that
I am out of your life

can you hear it?
my silent cries that seize hold of me
at random times of the day

can you feel it?
how deep my pain shot through my veins, aiming for
my heart but getting trapped in my lungs making it
almost too painful to breathe

When it Hurts to Breathe

how many days to get over it?

how long before i no longer break down

in a random checkout line

how long until I can fall asleep without thinking of you

how long until I no longer have to bite my tongue to

stop myself from saying your name just to remember

how it tastes

how long to forget your smile and the way those two

strands of hair fall in front of your face and

over your eyes

how long before I can forget the way only you could take

me to places unearthly

how long before the *what ifs* cease

how long till I can become complacent and return to

the me before you

how long before my heart begins to smile again and

can let another in

how long before I stop shuddering at the thought

of you with someone else

how long before I no longer see you in my dreams

how long before you become nothing but

a ghost of my past

how much longer before I can breathe normally again

how many days to get over you?

the world does not stop even when your heart does
you can be in the most crumbling dilapidating pain you
have ever experienced
with no idea if or how you would ever be normal again
and still be expected to show up
because life is cruel and insensitive that way.
the worst heartbreak does not give you a break
from the mundane
so you have to keep going and put one foot
in front of the other
day by day
resisting the urge to stop in the middle of the street
and ask why no one can hear the screams emanating
from you that are louder than the middle of
Times Square at six pm on a saturday

When it Hurts to Breathe

let us try this all over again -
the friendship
the endless laughter and seamless conversation
the natural high
the comfort and familiarity
the passion and lust we mistook for love
the enviable connection

let us try this all again
but this time
you [choose to] stay

Sheena

you told me so many times
and in so many ways
that you did not believe in love
or want anything more
than our current arrangement

why did I not just listen?

When it Hurts to Breathe

it really should have
worked out perfectly
because of how bad
I wanted it to be you
but
you never wanted it to be me.
so how could it have
possibly ever worked?

Sheena

why am I being punished
for choosing to believe
in fairytales?

When it Hurts to Breathe

if the walls of my bedroom
could talk
they would certainly cry for help
and pray for the end of
the painful ordeal
I put them through each night
and on some afternoons too

surely no one can cry and scream this much?

Sheena

I love new york
because it allowed us
to experience most
of our amazing memories
this past year

I hate new york
because I took you
to some of my favorite places
that would now forever
be tainted with you

I am sober now
so you would not be getting any drunk texts or
voice messages from me
but if I gave in to Don Julio just one time,
I would scroll all the way down
and find your name buried
in my messages back in October.
I would hit record and get right into it
I would ask why and how you were so casually mean
and could let go of us so easy
and how you moved on so seamlessly
I would wonder out loud
if you ever think of me
and why you never reached out.
I would tell you that I hate you
even though I would be lying
I would tell you that I am doing great without you
even though I would be lying

thank you I guess
for being the one to tear us apart
and to make sure we would never be together again
because if you had not
I do not know that I would ever have been strong enough
to walk away from something and someone
who did not deserve me

When it Hurts to Breathe

you used to tell me that
my tantrums and penchant for attention
were cute and endearing

so why did you leave
after that last one I threw?

Sheena

sometimes
breathing is
almost as hard as
not having you in my life

When it Hurts to Breathe

right before I get into the shower
I reach around
tracing the skin on my upper back
desperately hoping to feel
the marks you left behind
that had once been engraved in my skin
but have now began to slowly fade away
just like my memories of you

Sheena

I get to Grand Central
and head to track eighty eight
heading upstate at 11:05am.
now passing through Peekskill,
the trees outside are golden with a tint of red
and I feel an immense appreciation for nature.
I take a look at the empty seat next to me
and suddenly I am filled with the most
melancholic feeling ever
because

you should be here
but
so it goes

When it Hurts to Breathe

I finally got that piercing
you were going to come with me to get
and the pain of your absence
hurt a million times more
than the pain of the needle breaking through my skin

Sheena

you have always
known me to be
an overthinker
so why did you pick
my most vulnerable moment
to throw how little
I meant to you
in my face

forgive me if the dots connected a little too perfectly

When it Hurts to Breathe

I was learning a sixth language
and if you had just given me a bit more time
I would have become fluent
and be able to speak
the language of your heart

do not feel guilty for how passionate you were
or how hard you loved
or how intense your emotions and actions got

feel sorry for him because he did not know
how lucky he was to have to have
experienced life with you
feel sorry for him because he did not know what to do
with such a beautiful magical creature like you
feel sorry for him because he
let you walk out of his life
and let you go forever

When it Hurts to Breathe

she drew hearts
around his name
but he did not
even know hers

Sheena

give in to the pain
and you will be rewarded
with pleasure
but not like this, no

this is pain I did not ask for
and do not know what to do with

this is pain I would have been fine without
especially not from you

this pain does not lead
to pleasure
but rather
pure anguish and misery

When it Hurts to Breathe

how can I begin to heal
when I still fall asleep every night
with a polaroid of you on my nightstand
and your toothbrush in my bathroom right next to mine,
its presence heavy as I wash the day off my face

how can I begin to heal
when I cannot even let you go yet
your name constantly on the tip of my tongue
and our memories
wandering freely in the halls of my mind

after all these months and tears
I finally brought myself
to listen to that song
that we had cried to
uninhibited

after all these months and pain
I no longer feel anything
as I listen to all six minutes and sixteen seconds
of that song that used to mean everything

When it Hurts to Breathe

since you
it feels like many lifetimes have passed
but also like time has decided to crawl on by.
I have hurt like never before
but have also reached in within and learned that
all I need to survive had already been there all along.
I have grown and also resisted change simultaneously
I have shrunk to nothing
but also expanded beyond reason
I dulled and grayed out
but also found my sparkle that even the stars envy
I have let go of you and our memories
but gained all of me in return

since you
I have come to embrace the
incredible duality of becoming
a living, breathing paradox

I started out
by storing my tears in jars
until finally
I had enough to
fill up my bathtub with
the hopes of drowning but
the tears would not stop flowing
and all it did was
flood my apartment

When it Hurts to Breathe

I stand on the terrace
of the twenty ninth floor
tethering extremely and dangerously close to the edge
we were supposed to be in this together
but now I look over my shoulder
and see you standing in the doorway expressionless.
suddenly I do not want to go through with it, not alone
but my ego would not let me admit that
so instead I whisper
catch me before i fall. please.
willing our telepathy to work one last time
but it does not
and you just stand there unfazed,
your silence ultimately pushing me off the ledge.

they say your life flashes right at the end
so why was it all the potential of what could have been
that flashed before mine?

Sheena

being with you
was like the skin on the back of my hand
but learning to live without you
is like the frustration that comes in the early stages
of learning a new language

When it Hurts to Breathe

I had always had this
gnawing knowing feeling
that even though you projected
being detached and devoid of passion
you would eventually meet that one person
that would make you take it all back
and suddenly transform you
into someone extremely passionate

it just killed me that
I was not going to be the one
and would never get to experience
that love and security
that I had always craved
from you

Sheena

I cannot help but wonder
if you take pleasure
in my suffering

does it feel good knowing
you had a strong enough hold on me
and had the ability to
destabilize me
just by walking out on me?

When it Hurts to Breathe

you never did love me
because if you were feeling
half of what I was currently feeling
you would come back to me in a heartbeat
but you have not
so at least now I know
you do not love me
you never did

Sheena

I miss your voice
and
your body on mine

When it Hurts to Breathe

blank ribbons
form invisible wefts
roping tightly around my ribcage
to match the
blank space
where my heart used to be

everyone says they are so proud of me
for being so strong
and not finding my way back to you
but what if they found out

how often I almost cave and come looking for you
how close I get to tracing my steps back to
what is familiar
how I can sometimes fully rationalize
your actions in some twisted way
how I still sometimes wish to see your name
when my phone lights up

I bet they would not be so proud of me then

When it Hurts to Breathe

everything in between

this is the life we lived
running from commitment and
masking our vulnerable moments
the way we know best -
charging it to the game

I have no idea how we got here or
what we were so scared of -
you think it is always going to be this way?

turns out we were banking on how dynamic and
unpredictable life could get,
hoping that would eventually
set us on the right path. but it did not.

instead life's exact unpredictability swept in
like a category 7 hurricane and tore us apart
ensuring we would never be the same again -
unspoken words forever going to the grave with us

When it Hurts to Breathe

I would tell you a secret
one I have kept from even myself -
I feel almost relief
that it ended when it did
because at least now it is all over
and my healing can begin

I had genuinely started to believe
that I was no longer insane
that I was done with the crazy
and the mind games and the manipulation
I really did

but then you messed me up seven ways to Sunday
and put me through the wringer
and broke my heart for a second time

now I am learning that apparently
I am indeed still insane
and I do still have a unique degree of crazy in me
just brewing and simmering beneath the surface
at all times, patiently waiting for the other shoe to drop

so that when it is all said and done
I can revert to my old ways
and speak the language I am most fluent in -
toxicity.

then I can embrace my old mannerisms
like an old friend I have not seen in years
because this is my very own crazy
she is me and I am her.
stripped of everything
my crazy would find me and wrap itself around me
like tendrils on an ivy wall
and never let go

I saw a picture of you today
and your eyes did not have the light they used to.

I would go to bed tonight telling myself that
your eyes became lifeless when I walked away
and took all my magic and excitement with me

I would tell myself it is because you are
hurting and miserable

I would think of those beautiful eyes of yours

I had always loved so much
and convince myself they look dead because
you miss me

the moon blinks and I stir.
I feel a foreign yet familiar presence
at the foot of my bed
I turn slowly and see her sitting there watching me.
I am not startled
because she is the ghost of a lover from a past life

our conversation flows seamlessly
like old friends catching up at brunch in the west village.
outside the sun hints from beyond the horizon
and we know our rendezvous is coming to an end

right before she leaves
I ask what it feels like to no longer love someone
you gave all your heart to
and how she got over me because
I am struggling with letting go of someone
I thought was my soulmate
and if I would ever remember how to breathe again

she gives me a painful smile
one that does not quite reach her eyes
before she replies,
I would let you know when I figure that out myself

When it Hurts to Breathe

you did not ruin
our relationship
because of your rhetoric

you ruined
our relationship
because of how you made me feel

Sheena

~~why do you hate me so much?~~

how could you hate me so much?

When it Hurts to Breathe

part of the beauty of writing
is that

I could make you out to be
a literal angel and the gold standard
which every lover should aspire to
or you could be
the crappiest person ever
and have strangers despising
you and all of your audacity.

I choose to let the words speak for themselves
and now look where we are

maybe try not breaking
a writer's heart next time

Sheena

just as my name
is never going to not be a part of me
the essence of you
will always be a part of me

When it Hurts to Breathe

I step outside
my apartment in manhattan
and cannot help
but sift through
all the clamor and tumult
hoping to hear your voice
floating somewhere above
all of the chaos of the city

one second
you are fine
and the next
you see a picture of him
and suddenly you are an emotional wreck

one minute
your laugh comes from deep within you
and the next
the light is gone from behind your eyes
and you are gasping for air

one day
you are adding any and every thing
to your cart in Target
and the next
the tears are flowing nonstop
because a song comes on that
reminds you too much of him

that is the funny thing
about being heartbroken and healing
at the same time.
but not funny haha

When it Hurts to Breathe

483 days
seem so trivial
yet they contain
some of the best memories
of my life

Sheena

what were we even fighting about again?

When it Hurts to Breathe

I wash my face
do my six step skincare routine
and tell my best friend how i am so over you
even as I throw on one of your shirts

it feels like my dirty little secret.
she has no idea it is yours
and so I inhale your scent effortlessly
or at least what is left of it
while swearing defiantly that I never want to see you
and how much I despise you,
while simultaneously breathing you in as I fall asleep

would my love for you and this unrelenting pain
in my heart finally cease when the scent
of you fades from your shirts and my sheets?

at night
I do not dream of fairy tales or happy endings
no

I dream of the look you always get in your eyes
that knowing look
right before you claimed me as yours
followed with me spending the next couple of hours
saying your name over and over again.
that knowing and piercing look you gave me
that took me to places
even angels could only dare to dream of.

bargaining.

I have been stuck in this third stage of grief
for a while now.
sometimes it blurs between denial and bargaining
but after four months of radio silence
I am reasonable enough to know you leaving is real.
but bargaining is different -
the blame, anxiety, insecurity, ruminating
and overthinking
the *if onlys, what ifs*, helplessness and
wanting to travel back in time

I better get comfortable because
I have a feeling this would be my home
for the next couple of months

on nights like these
where I cannot think properly
and the tears do not stop flowing
accompanied with body wracking sobs,
I genuinely hate you

on nights like these
there are no delusional fantasies
about getting back together
because I see it for what it really is
and I am filled with nothing but
despise and resentment towards you

on nights like these
I just want the
pain to go away
and the thoughts too

on nights like these
I pray for
morning to come sooner

When it Hurts to Breathe

take my hand
and dance with me forever
with no music but the strings of our hearts tugging
in rhythm

dance with me
past when our feet stop hurting and they go numb

dance with me
till the palm of your hand feels like home on the
small of my back

dance with me
till the scent of my hair is all you know and crave

dance with me
till the sun rises and the birds emerge from their slumber

dance with me forever
and never let go

have you written today?

I was writing something filled with
love and fairytales and happy endings
my main inspiration coming from
the energy between us which I thought
was so magical I had to write about it

after you showed me that an
opposite side of love existed -
a hurt that was equally as
poetic and magical
I paused the first one to write this

at the very least
it has helped reduce the amount of times I cried,
every time I put down pen to paper to
write about you

When it Hurts to Breathe

I feel like the biggest fraud
because I swear I have moved on and healed
because I can go days without saying your name
and successfully resist the urge to
replay old voice messages
but then
all it takes is a flashback of
one of our happy memories
and suddenly
all the blood rushes to my head
my heart rate rises
my lungs constrict and
my tear ducts are filled with more rain
than an afternoon in May

Sheena

maybe I was drawn to you
because you were unconventional
the same way I was

we ignored the rules and detached from societal norms
we bonded over our disdain for normalcy
and skirted around boundaries like they were
an inconvenience
we made up our own rules
which changed faster than the weather
and operated solely on vibes
but then I grew out of that phase
and suddenly wanted some of the things that
regular people wanted too
but you could not give that to me and
definitely did not know how to anyway

so the carousel slowed down just long enough
for you to watch me get off
and begin my long arduous journey in search of
my new identity
while you simply carried on unbothered and unbuckled
on the wild ride that was life
not interested in what else was out there or
curious enough to see what had made me pivot
but instead,
simply spinning round and round
into the centerless whirlpool
and calling that
freedom

When it Hurts to Breathe

the one with the funny name
where did she come from?

I had hoped you were miserable
and hurting
but instead there is a girl I have never seen before
standing a bit too close to you
and though I do not know a single thing about her
I have already decided I do not like her one bit

*an avocado
half a lemon
some salt and black pepper*

you had always wondered
what I added to that recipe
to make it taste as good as it always did.

I never did tell you
that the secret ingredient
was pure unconditional love

When it Hurts to Breathe

I miss you
so much more
than I loved you

welcome to my own personal hell.

Sheena

I used to think
trauma bonding
was only a thing
that happened
between two victims
but I was wrong

you traumatized me
and I bonded myself even
tighter to you than before

When it Hurts to Breathe

sometimes i miss being naive

the wet blade of grass
piercing through my foot
but creating a crimson bloom
in the middle of my chest

When it Hurts to Breathe

at the end of every year
I would play hangman with your name
so after the fifth year
all five letters of your name will be gone
along with the thoughts and memories of you

Sheena

maybe if we had
made it to winter
our love would have
been frozen in place
and eventually bloom
and thrive once
spring came back around

in the story of us
you are the villain
and I plan on killing you off
just like in my reality
except readers tend to
sympathize with
characters who die
and you do not deserve any
sort of sympathy

Sheena

why is it easier
letting everyone else go
but not *you*

When it Hurts to Breathe

my pain ricochets
off of me
and projects itself
as impatience and
meanness on
everyone around me

sometimes I gaslight myself
and say maybe none of it was real
and maybe I was a bit too delusional

but this can only be heartbreak
if there was formerly love

there can only be this much tears shed
if there were laughter and happy memories

you can only be moving on
if there is someone you were getting over

I can only feel this lonely
if we had ever been together

I can only be avoiding places in my city
if there are specific significant memories attached

When it Hurts to Breathe

someone once
told me it would take more than
a lifetime to forget me.
I hope you bear the same sentiment
and that you spend the rest of your days
with the ghost of me
roaming around the hallways
of your brain
moving in rent free,
the walls echoing and reverberating
with my unique laugh
your senses intoxicated with
my lingering scent and aura
forever haunting
your every waking moment
with what could have been

Sheena

the stars cry
and glisten a little brighter
on the nights
when we are thinking
of each other
at the same time
but cannot do
anything about it

guess it was wishful thinking
that in your unrelenting
pursuit of freedom
you would eventually
run towards me

Sheena

if I had shrunk myself
would you have wanted me then?
maybe you would have loved me more
but then
I would not have loved you

When it Hurts to Breathe

I could think of
a million ways
and places
to tell you to
shove your sweet nothings
but they are all quite crass
so never mind

you had been smoking
and put it out carelessly
while I was standing
right in front of you

the ashes burnt through my
shirt and onto my skin
but I interpreted it as
some sort of covenant
sealing our love forever

When it Hurts to Breathe

blowing up
our hearts
and lives
this way?
that was so sabotage of us my love

Sheena

from strangers
to lovers
to friends
to lovers
to strangers
what a fucking disaster

When it Hurts to Breathe

I would give anything
to see you
standing in your room
stroking your cat and
looking over the East River
with the helicopters and ferries,
thinking about me and
wondering what is left for you now
and how you could have ever let it get to this point

do not spend your entire life
getting over someone
who spends every waking moment of his life
chasing freedom
and only “*valuing community not relationships*”
whatever that even means

When it Hurts to Breathe

I hope you love her
so much it hurts
and you cannot picture life without her
I hope you finally understand
the meaning of '*if he wanted to he would*'
I hope she is all you can think about
and then

right when you think that
it can only keep getting better
I hope she breaks your heart
and leaves you wondering
why it hurts so much
just trying to breathe

when you are in the middle
or even at the peak
of your heartbreak
from someone you were with but
who you could not really call yours
perhaps the worst question of all is
what claim do I really have to even feel this way?

When it Hurts to Breathe

I have had two glitter phases

the first was with the actual particles
in all shapes and colors
somehow always making sure
they found their way on me and everything I owned

the second was you

I am in a bar in east village
it is a little after two in the morning
and there is a cute guy
trying to make conversation with me.
I wonder why I am not engaging
when it hits me

I do not want to start from scratch
I crave the familiarity and comfort I had with you
I stare into this stranger's eyes and
realize he does not know about
my major indecisiveness or
my massive shopping addiction or
how you could spend almost two days with me and
I would still not want you to leave because of
my abandonment issues
and that he would have to learn
how hard it is for me to fall asleep and then stay asleep
but I have to stop thinking like this

because
I am learning everyday that no one
would ever compare to you and that is okay.
because there is beauty in new beginnings
and I plan on fully embracing that

he waited
for your body
to heat up and combust
from the intense flames
of passion you both shared
before proceeding to
dust away the ashes
like they meant nothing

Sheena

somewhere along the way
I had lost the plot

I put you on a pedestal
and forgot I was the main character
but that is okay
because this is me
taking my power back

When it Hurts to Breathe

from
you breaking my heart with your actions
to
me breaking my own heart by still choosing to stay

I hate that you proved my best friend right

she had called out all the gaps
all the red flags I had chosen to ignore
and all the potential for heartbreak
which I responded to by making excuses
and beginning to leave out the scenarios
where I knew you would not look too good

still when we went up in flames
and the tears would not stop coming in the
middle of the night,
she was the one I called.
I am grateful that she was kind enough to
never say *I told you so*
but instead
sat with me in bed,
let me cry on her shoulder
and told me I would be okay

When it Hurts to Breathe

if I had gone ahead
and moved the 10,353 miles
right after graduation
like I had always talked about
we would still be in each other's lives right now-
battling time difference and
scheduling calls weeks in advance
but we would have made it work
instead
I stayed here,
a mere 3 miles away
and now the distance between us
is too wide to ever bridge

Sheena

I thought I saw you today
but it was just another
6'4 boy on a scooter

When it Hurts to Breathe

and months later
I still cannot get you
out of my head

I feel you everywhere
all over me.

come watch the
sunrise with me.
on the way up the mountain
I would tell you all about
how my heart drips
with reckless abandon
when it comes to you.
I would share my secrets
with just you
while the trees and birds around us eavesdrop.
we would get to the peak
and as the sky illuminates and burns around us
I feel you melt into me
as nature wonders why
we are setting ourselves up
for inevitable heartbreak

When it Hurts to Breathe

for so long
I yearned
for us to somehow
get back together

- *a confession I am not so proud of*

Sheena

I fake a smile
and hold my head high
even though my insides
could be mistaken
for a steaming bowl of oatmeal

I put on an outfit that shows off my body
pack my hair in a low ponytail
and put on the biggest hoops I can find
just like you liked

looking in the mirror
I wipe away my tears
with one hand and with the other
reapply my eyeliner
in the same breath.

why are sad girls the prettiest?

When it Hurts to Breathe

I heard
you are playing victim
and crying wolf

how does the person
who is the reason
I have tear-soaked pillows every night
get to say
I am the one who broke us?

unreal.

Sheena

it only took me
ten years, eleven months and twenty nine days too long
to finally understand that
you will never
take a chance on me

When it Hurts to Breathe

I hate that I had become
so dependent on the
sound of your breathing
when you slept
because
it was the only thing
that could trump my insomnia effortlessly
and made me feel safe

fighting
is what happens
when you are in the thick of falling apart
and after spending a mere few days
without talking,
realize you cannot possibly do life without them
or at least do not want to

surviving
is what happens
months later when
the radio silence is louder than
the intersection of 34th and 6th avenue
and it turns out you can do life without them
but still do not want to
because it will always be easier to
return to what is familiar.
but you stand firm because
now you know you are definitely better off

friends sometimes
unknowingly still
bring up your name
and all I want
to do is
deny deny deny
ever knowing you

Sheena

I think we should go back to strictly being friends.

sure but when have we ever been just friends?

When it Hurts to Breathe

being self aware
is realizing that
I get extremely
mean when I am
heartbroken or
hurt by someone
I love(d)

Sheena

it was not a vibe
but a perfect excuse
to avoid reality
so no
I do not know the vibe
because
the vibe does not exist,
it never did

there was this cute boy
at trivia night on
Roosevelt's Island last week

he was the first person
I had taken even a
minute interest in
since you.
he smiled when I told him my name
and made me laugh
and asked about the
pendant of the dagger with a rose
that I wear around my neck.
at the end of the night
I finally ask him what his name is
but it starts with an 'A'
just like yours

and just like that
I knew he and I were never going to work
at least not this soon.

Sheena

my therapist said
maybe you never really loved me
and all I want to do is
pick up my phone and call you
so you can tell her how wrong she is.
but then again
what if you actually never really loved me?

When it Hurts to Breathe

I am delusional enough
to believe that
our story would be
rivalled for ages to come

and if we never speak again
I want you to know that
no matter how hard I try
I do not regret you

hold on to that and
never let go

When it Hurts to Breathe

I bet you wished
you had just picked
up the phone and
called me that
Friday morning after

he swears he loves me
and as I feel his breath
hot on my skin and
his hands roaming
all over my body with certainty
I cannot help
but believe him

now when all I am left with
is this huge gaping void
and promises of
what would never be,
I cannot help but wonder
if it was really love
or simply lust

whose idea was it anyway
to do that thing
where we combined
our first names
into a makeshift word
and constantly fell back on that
as the excuse we needed for
any and every unexplainable thing we did?
that was the beginning of our downfall.

but to be fair
our names did blend so perfectly together.

and what do we say then
when we find that suddenly
we have gone from lovers
endlessly intoxicated with
each other's aura
to strangers
whose only thing in common
is the glow of the moon at night

When it Hurts to Breathe

struggling to choose
between
pure selective amnesia
or
simply being indifferent

I had convinced myself
that you were simply afraid
of love and commitment
or had been scarred
from past relationships
but that was not it

you were simply not
interested in getting
into any of that with me

When it Hurts to Breathe

there are still moments
when I cannot find
the words to
describe or relay
how bad it hurts and
how much pain
our falling apart left on me
and that is perhaps the most
dilapidating feeling of all

Sheena

learning to breathe through the pain

this is the last chapter of us

you should have known all along that
in this elaborate and dangerous game we played
I would get the last word in

now
the worst is over... at least until my next heartbreak

promise me
that when you are not okay
and it feels like you would never be the same again
and your eyes and heart are so sore from crying
promise me that you would sit in it
for as long as you need to.
take your time
and just be there
regardless of how long it takes
because if there is one thing I have learned
is that you cannot rush healing.
so feel what you are feeling
and eventually
your soul will whisper to you
when it is ready to begin the
bittersweet process that is healing

palm your way through the darkness
your eyes adjusting being your only source of light
put one foot in front of the other
until one day
you emerge on the other side
stronger than ever

When it Hurts to Breathe

if anyone is reading this
that means my twin flame has run out
and I have experienced indescribable pain
which I would never wish on my worst enemy
but

if anyone is reading this
then it also means I am slowly but surely
picking up the pieces
and that I would be okay eventually
because I am finally learning to breathe again

Sheena

I have just now realized that
I misinterpreted you knowing and understanding me
in the way no one else did
as you loving me

and one day
I finally stop the downward spiral
pause the heartbreak playlist that had been on repeat
for as long as I can remember
and get myself out of bed

I light my favorite candle that smells just like coffee,
walk over to my desk
channel all my feelings and thoughts
both those I have clarity on
as well as those I am still fuzzy on
and soon enough the blank pages
in my spiral notebook fill up rapidly
like they could not get fed fast enough

and I know in that moment
that I am going to be okay
and that this is the beginning
of learning how to breathe again

Sheena

heal from a place of hurt and intentionality
not bitterness and mixed emotions

When he comes back, because they always do,
I need you to choose you.

An undeniable part of you that is human will be elated and feel validated that he finally came back but that is all it is. He is doing this more for himself than for you. He is putting himself and his needs before you, your peace of mind and your healing journey once again.

So dig deep within and find the strength, however little, to put yourself first not him. The past few months were not make-believe but were at the expense of your mental health. It was real - all of it.

So when he comes back three months later saying he “understands more than ever” and “misses you more than ever,” I hope you have the clarity to see that he is just being selfish yet again. I love you.

Sheena

forgive me
for not being able to
forgive you

do not be swayed just yet - read the fucking writing on the wall

do not be swayed if his 'comeback' message includes a lot of "I's" but not in the way that means he is taking accountability. he is simply being selfish once again

do not be swayed if he says he wants to talk and that he gets it. it only took him a slight inconvenience many months later, compared to your countless nights of heartache and sadness for him to come around

do not be swayed because he has only just realized he lost you and how badly he messed up. would you really want to be with someone who did not realize your worth and was okay letting you struggle with all this hurt?

break me down
rip my will to shreds
set my skin on flames
and watch it all melt away like dripping wax
but leave my soul behind
for from that
I will build back up

Rome was not built in a day
and the same goes for your boundaries.
so when you do start to rebuild,
brick by brick
day by day
build your walls high and thick
that he cannot get back in
but also low and thin enough
that the next person in your life
does not suffer the consequences
of the actions of one silly boy

Sheena

I am a fighter
and a survivor
I always have been

so I know
this too shall pass

does suddenly questioning
why and how
I ever found you attractive
count as the
beginning stages of
healing?

it is okay
if you do cave
when he finally circles back

it is okay
because you are human
and you do still have feelings for him
you probably always would

it is okay
because he did not allow you to fully heal yet
before he strolled back in with the biggest audacity

it is not okay
however
to give all your power to him
and let him dictate your feelings or pace
or worse
disrupt your healing

the worst part
of it all is that
eventually
you would be okay
but
you would never be
the same ever again

I hate that
no matter what
you got to have
access to all of me

although you ultimately lost me,
there was a time I let you in
in a way that I did not let anyone else

I hate that the person
I loved so deeply and thought
would be my forever person
did not realize what he had.
God, I hate that so much

When it Hurts to Breathe

I would like
to thank myself
for getting through
this shitshow
called heartbreak

there are going to be
so many times
where you second guess
and doubt everything
but you need to
trust yourself
and know that
you made the best decisions
with what you were feeling
in the moment.
regardless of your actions,
if he was genuine and
wanted to fix things
then he would have

you deserve so much better.

When it Hurts to Breathe

you did nothing wrong
and it was not just all in your head
so stop gaslighting yourself

Sheena

when you left
you were not even decent enough
to hand me back
my heart but rather
left me picking up the pieces

I had no idea
I would still be putting
myself back together
for months and years to come

When it Hurts to Breathe

take him off
the pedestal
and put yourself
back on

have you learned your lesson yet?

that you should have put you first all along
that all that love and energy you poured into someone
else should have filled you up first
that you should not find your happiness solely in him
that everyone leaves eventually except for your own soul
that him saying he loves you could mean something
different than what you define love to be
that no one would be there for the constant and
endless breaking down that happens for months after
that no amount of tears shed or loud screams
would bring him back
that if he really wanted to then he would have

have you learned your lesson yet or would you like
to be taught all of this again from the very beginning?

When it Hurts to Breathe

if it helps,
keep a running list
of everything he ever did
that hurt you
regardless of
how insignificant you think it is

whenever you start to
forget or doubt your feelings
and start making excuses for him
and his actions,
return to the list.
this is about survival.

Sheena

I watch the flame flicker one last time
before it finally runs out
and then gather all the ashes into a makeshift urn.
I hold a moment of silence that lasts about four minutes.
I do not say any kind words or share fond stories.
mentally I compartmentalize the memories
and every bit of you
and put them in a box in my brain titled *selective amnesia*.
I detach you from any and every bit of my apartment.
I am dressed in all black.
this is how I process that we really are done
and would not be resurrected, not ever.

welcome to your funeral, my love
may you rest in karma.

When it Hurts to Breathe

forgive and forget
they said

I have not yet forgiven
but I am starting
to forget
why I ever loved you

Sheena

it is okay
to run away from
what hurt you
as long as you
also run towards
what heals you

stop making excuses
for someone who
could not possibly care less
for how his actions
make you feel and look.
you know better.

- *a not so friendly reminder*

Sheena

“this has been exhausting and I am so done and over it. bye.”

When it Hurts to Breathe

wipe your tears and
get back up
sweet girl.
enough already.

Sheena

be your own
happy place

unfortunately for you
I have never been one to
take the high road
or pick up the desire to
be the bigger person
so I think it goes without saying
that I do not wish you well
or hope you have a nice life

no, I wish you the very worst
and hope you become
karma's most frequently visited guest

And in eight years
if you called me I would pick up but it would be
the most awkward conversation.

We would tell each other that we are doing okay and
that work is good, family is well and life is great, but
agree it is all going by so fast while avoiding talking
about relationships. Then there would be an awkward
silence which would have once been so comfortable
but now feels like fingernails scratching the walls. We
would both rush to fill up the quiet with
meaningless small talk before eventually
wrapping up with *“glad to hear you are doing okay”*
and *“take care of yourself.”*

I would hang up, somehow knowing that this is the
last time we would ever talk, and sit in the same position
for twenty more minutes reminiscing on words eternally
left unsaid and thoughts of what could have,
would have, should have been,
before moving on with my life.

When it Hurts to Breathe

nothing lasts forever
except
the haunting thoughts
of what could have been

never say never
is a farce -
a cruel play on hope
and all it stands for

because in life
there are some things
you should absolutely say
never again to

like the thought of
him ever having any sort of
place in your life after
it has all been said and done

after months of
finally coming to terms
with all that has happened,
I have now been able
to reduce you to a
mere pretty boy
who was just not
that into me
and had no idea what he had.

Sheena

sometimes all it takes
are genuine conversations
with the people in your life
who sincerely and whole-heartedly
love you
to remind you of
who the fuck you are

I had assumed
that the day you
walked out of my life
was the highest
my heart rate
could ever spike
but the peak of my anxiety
did not actually come
until the day I
realized that we were
really, truly, very much
over

Sheena

how am I supposed
to live without you?

by waking up every morning
and living without you.

When it Hurts to Breathe

I finally broke the chains
that had led me to think
you were going to be the
paramount person
I would ever meet

if he came back
right now,
knowing all that you do
and remembering the feelings
of less than
that he made you feel
and looking in his eyes
knowing he was the one that
caused you all that
pain and sadness,
would you even want him back?

When it Hurts to Breathe

I need to write
about you
so I can begin to move on

I need to stop writing
about you
so I can begin to move on

Sheena

you know,
you could have
at least
let me down easy

When it Hurts to Breathe

how have I been?

fiercely sad

Sheena

I swear I was doing just fine three months in, with longer periods of time going by before the thought of you overwhelmed me and I end up giving in to my anxiety. Until that Sunday on my way back from the airport when you messaged me randomly.

And just like that, the spiraling began all over again. You had said you wanted to talk and that you genuinely understood. I hate how I secretly wanted to hear what you had to say, and the fact that after all the communication blackout, you had reached out because it was just too much to bear.

At least that was until the four days of excruciating radio silence that followed before I learned that you had simply drunk texted me and decided the morning after that you in fact did not want to talk to me and proceeded to ensure none of your potential future texts ever make it through.

Finding that out broke me in ways I would never be able to put into words and I found myself late at night on my bathroom floor screaming and gasping for air because the hurt was simply too much to bear and I wanted to die.

How can the one person you love the most continually

When it Hurts to Breathe

set out to see just how deep he could cut you? Why?

That night was not the beginning of the end but rather the literal and actual end of us. "we're done. we're so done. over. we're done. we're completely over," I whispered again and again until I finally fell asleep on the cold, tiled floor.

as much as I
like to think i am fully responsible
for finally learning to
breathe through the pain,
I know deep down
that it is truly just
the passage of time,
however slow,
that has helped

When it Hurts to Breathe

you are in your room
berating yourself and
grieving over someone
who only finds himself
inconvenienced by
the thought of
being alone
rather than the loss
of your presence

Sheena

before you go

do you want to feel my braids wrapped around and
tangled between your fingers one more time?

do you want to firmly slide your palm between my legs -
the heat from my body matching yours?

would you like to run your fingers down my spine
extremely slow in the way you know drives me insane?

how about grabbing my neck aggressively and not
letting go even as I get dizzy from the lack of oxygen and
another second passes before you breathe air back into
my lungs with your lips?

would you give me that look you get that lets me know
what is coming and feel things without you saying a word?

do you want to trail your lips down my body,
kissing my scars and leaving bite marks in the
empty spaces -
marks I know I would still feel and see long after?

before you go

would you like to hear me say that I am yours and no one
else's even though I would be lying?

to the end of an era.
maybe it was real
or maybe it was all in my head
and I romanticized it a bit too well

but one thing I can say for certain is
these are the final chapters
and as the tears start to slow down
and the pages begin to thin out
and the ink dries
we would be friends no more
we would be lovers no more

I stand on my doorstep
staring at her.
I give her a hug
and she whispers
my soul is tired.
at least she does not look
like what she has been through

I know, but you are safe now,
I whisper back.
welcome home.

we hug again
while the neighbor in the apartment
across from mine
is debating calling for help
because all he sees is me
wrapping my arms around myself
and seemingly talking to the air

When it Hurts to Breathe

just when you think
you are all cried out,
the ache in your head condenses
with each breath you take
and each thought of him
until it becomes too much
for your heart to bear
and now here you are
on the 2 train heading uptown
with tears streaking down
your face and you can do nothing
except let them fall

Sheena

you said you could never
not have me in your life.

either you were lying
or developed a serious case of amnesia

maturing is
understanding
that you would
both always have
varying versions
of what happened
and finally
accepting that

do not let
the pain and loss
define you
but rather be
what finally pushes you
to search for
the things that
inspire and bring color
back to your life

When it Hurts to Breathe

I am torn
between envying the next girl
that gets your attention
or taking pity on her
for what you are about
to put her through.

soon enough
the pain becomes
a dull ache
and you are reminded
about the beautiful
things in life

like how a book
you read in English class in college
ends up uniting you with
a stranger at a bookstore
years later
and leads you to
start believing in love,
meet-cutes,
and fairytales again

When it Hurts to Breathe

turns out
you were my almost,
not my forever

Sheena

your heart
has forgotten
me
but I am all
your soul
remembers
and searches for

When it Hurts to Breathe

maybe this is how
it was always meant to be

maybe it had to
end this way and
hurt this much
because together,
we ripped out the chord that
from beginning of time,
had formed our soul ties.

the persistent ache
and longing that seem
like they have been there
longer than you can remember
finally begin to dull
and the knots that had
bound themselves to you
tighter than a sailor's hitch
finally begin to loosen
and eventually unravel.
then one random morning
you are standing in your living room
watering your plants
when you suddenly realize
it does not hurt to breathe anymore.

If you made it to the end, I appreciate you.
Thank you for coming on this journey with
me and sharing a space where I can be
utterly vulnerable.

Until the next one,
Sheena.

Sheena

When it Hurts to Breathe