



wounds, words, + wonders from pandemic times

by Aridescence

This is the rot and regrowth of this embryonic era.

About the scarlet moons of abuse. About the threat of secrets.
About suffocating beneath their weight.

About the tides of delight, how one moment they're laughing
at your feet, and the next, you are swimming and still, the
next, you are firmly standing, eons away, dry, ridden with
shells and detritus.

This is about Big Brother and legibility. About weeping with
the most fiery oceans. About trying to reshape yourself, after
ignoring a tsunami of crimson flags. About the brutal task of
picking out the shrapnel in the aftermath (or trying to).

About revolution and love— the murmurs of mutiny and the
mercurial mirages of self—about Becoming.

And still, all of it, hopelessly fleeting, gorgeous, a chariot
across the inky depths— your heart sturdy and fragile—your
churning opalescent blood spilling on to the hungry
ground—the offerings all leading to—maybe— a *pearl*.

(Content warning: child abuse (physical/emotional), brief references to sexual assault, death, suicide, abuse/domestic violence.)

"Only Time Will Tell"

I can only see in disordered discordant fragments. The images are of two kinds. Either waxen and stale. Or stark, crisp, crystalline clarity. Only to descend back into madness, into fog, into a crimson cell of my own making, and then suddenly—to black. The flint of my adolescent years rears its ugly heads. The past is more alive than what was the present. It still burns.

It's small, these windows I am in the rented room that I do not know I will be staying in for the next... year? The walls are green. Months in and out. This married couple, kind old folk. They are both so tender. They make me miss my grandparents. I see their family and feel envious. I see the family of one of my contemporaries at her art show and grow envious. They have faces that look like hers. I feel envious. I feel guilty for that envy.

I am falling in love with a woman who loves anarchism as much as I do and I feel alive. I feel guilty because [REDACTED] feels bad.

I am 22 and my mother tells me I look like a china doll. She is white. I am 5 years old and people ask me why my mother doesn't look like me. By the time I have an answer that encapsulates the complexities and feels even close to right, I'm an adult. I feel envious. I feel guilty for that envy. Now it is before the pandemic. Right before the pandemic. I like art school but it is also hell. My studio had no windows. It is a small cramped room. I house so many things there. I am in love with someone I shouldn't be in love with. He's a graduate student with great things ahead of him and I am a trainwreck that never stops. I feel adoration. I feel guilty for that adoration. [REDACTED] is interwoven in my life still. Every summer I inflict damage on myself by living with my abuser again, because there's nowhere else to go.. I am in debt and trying to save money to visit [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I am trying to keep up. My parents are screaming at me for not being able to continue to have good grades in university. They tell me nothing in life is free and I'm wasting their money. I don't know how to explain to them that I've wanted to die since I was 11.

I am at the beach with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and Ellie before she came out. I am knee deep in the jade of the water. I am holding a shallow shell, the hinge of it broken, the animal long gone, bivalve wings fluttering. Its doors only hold a temporary moon, this memory. I feel happy. I feel happy about feeling happy. I

release the waning gibbous into the crescendo of foam, never to be seen or touched by me again.

I am back in my bedroom when I am small, I am being hurt again and again. I feel guilty, it is my fault. I am nearly in love with someone I shouldn't be in love with—he has a girlfriend and I don't exist to her because he is very afraid of her knowing. He says he doesn't want me hurt. I feel adoration. I feel guilty for the adoration. We are in love. I am with his girlfriend, she's my girlfriend too. I am back at school and barely surviving. I go on a dissociative rampage. I almost die in that classroom, in the company of the man I love. He is probably tired of witnessing a trainwreck. I woke up in the hospital (again). I woke up in the hospital (again). I woke up in the hospital (again). I wake up with a tube down my throat and the nurses say I need to keep still so that my lungs stay open to receive air. Drowning in memories or drowning by your own vomit sound like the same wound. My mother is right, maybe, I am a failure. "Could I atleast succeed at dying?" is what I thought. I am here, she is my lover, and she is very soft and sweet... except when she isn't. My girlfriend has held a knife to my boyfriend, and a knife to herself. She calls me the sweetest thing. She called me a bitch. My mother calls me a bitch. I am 15 and being slapped in the face again. I am 22 and on the brink of freedom but I don't have the energy to remove the last of my shackles. I am 23 or 24 and my girlfriend makes me feel as though nothing I do can make her happy. I am 11 and a woman is choking me on the floor. I am 15 and I got my first and only "C" and I have to pay the consequences. I am 24 and writing, about to turn 25, trying to remember memories in order. I am 17 and my mother tells me that I will never amount to anything and no college would ever accept me and that I am a massive failure and the most



selfish person she knows. She tells me I don't care about anyone but myself. My girlfriend calls me selfish. She tells me I don't care about anyone but myself. I dream about the mother I never got to meet. I dream with my eyes open. When I go to bed, history replays. The nightmares ruin me. My mind replays events, and I am

stuck. When I am awake, I am 10 different timelines at once. I've been born in a loop. I've been looking and looking and looking for a way out. I have lost years of my life. Whoever said "time will tell" if things shape up... never had to relive hell over and over again.

The Crime I Committed (part 1)

It was going well. Just a normal conversation. But then I did a horrible thing.

"So not to interrupt...but I have news to share," I steadied myself, taking a big shaky breath.

" [REDACTED] is going to be in Maryland."

"Oh he's coming over near you? How long will he be visiting?"

I corrected you, and said, "No, I mean...he's moving to Maryland."

Immediately I could see a shift in the air, in your gaze, even on video call. I scrambled for a semblance of casualness—to offer some solace and not have to acknowledge the mounting panicked uptick in heartbeats, the stone that suddenly appeared in my stomach.. .

I motioned, inside and out, gesturally and verbally pleading throughout. The rest of our conversation is gone from my memory, but what always remains is the overwhelming sense that I had committed a crime (Of what exactly? Telling you that one of the people I liked was moving to the state over, temporarily?). The crime of respecting you as an adult who could respond with respect to me and other people's autonomy? The crime of trying to openly communicate with you, in a polyamorous relationship?)

But this feeling was all too familiar—the panic, the coursing adrenaline as though I felt like I was about to be brutalized, the mounting fear. I saw the change in your eyes, becoming even starker. The warm honey brown pools of your eyes completely changed. The image was so jarring, I found myself exiting my body, once again, becoming an outsider to my own actions, a familiar tune.

My voice, your voice. It all sounded rather far away. The warmth in your gaze had become strange, alien, cold. As your voice grew more barbed, colder still, I briefly had the thought that your expression echoed that of a deceased fish—eyes like dark dead marbles where a soul should be, no softening shutter of your eyelids—just a blank stare. It was as if every gentle part of your person had suddenly died and all that you could ever exist as was an absence—an impenetrable force, devoid of humanity, devoted solely to calculating the maximum amount of harm you could inflict.

Your frown, your lips almost as thin as your patience for anything that sets you off, also fish-like, and the stress lines in your face, noticeable. The marks of misery inflicted on others I guess won't escape you either, as you've marked yourself.

It was a horrific and familiar face. It was the coldest gaze I ever saw in my life, short of the piercing windows of my childhood abuser. I thought it was a little uncanny that two people with such different eye colors and backgrounds could look so similar at that moment.

In hindsight, it's kind of obvious that two women with severe anger management problems who dwell on a trigger hair of resurrecting a perpetually molten core of fury... resemble each other. Who view love as continual acts of possession. Who often offer up their most bitter, judgmental selves... but can't take even a fraction of what cruelty they dish out to others. And, who view everything as a competition in which either they win or win through "Tonya Harding" their perceived opponent (*read: your lovers, your own child, or someone who you should treat with the utmost care and not treat like an enemy*). I digress. And through that miserable inferno of your reigned fury, I collapsed. Me, on the receiving end. Emotionally bruised by another tornado who said they loved me. The guilt is the poison. The alcohol is after the fact.



I think it was a few days later that I tried to kill myself, after another bout. I ended

up in the psych ward, alive and not well.

I know what the crime I committed was, now that I think of it. If there was a jail for love and I was subject to its cruel walls, I would undoubtedly be shackled to its windowless rooms by my own absurd faith in your capabilities— thinking you are a better person than you really are. And the saddest thing about it?

Part of me still is guilty of that crime.

The Crime I Committed (part 2)

Later, I'm on the phone with [REDACTED] and he reacts viscerally.

“You shouldn't have told her that.”

“I thought you said that I should communicate more openly with her.”

“... Iris. You can't just tell her things like that. You should've run it by me first.”

“Would you or her have reacted any differently if I did?”

“Well, no, but...look. She can't handle certain information. She needs to be... led in slowly. You can't just drop a bombshell on us like this.”

“Bombshell? I said [REDACTED] was moving.”

“You've got to be kidding me. He's moving in practically! After what, like a month? Iris, this is deeply irresponsible.”

“So I shouldn't have said anything like last time? You asked me to be more communicative. He's moving to a state over to work on a permaculture community, he's not moving in, jesus christ, [REDACTED], I can't control his movements, he was already planning on this for ages, before he even met me...”

We go back and forth for a while. I'm beyond tired. Looking back at this, I can't help but see this as infantilizing of her. She is not held responsible for any of her actions. It's always me with the dagger. It's always my fault. I hear my father's voice echoing in my head, from a different time: “She can't handle certain information. You know she just can't, she'll... lash out. This is just how she is.”

Or perhaps, the more recent—a father blaming his daughter for this tornado's ability to threaten me with revenge porn.

So here it is again. A double bind. The daughter with the birthright of inherited fury—her lovers, the mirror—I alone, stand responsible for managing catastrophe.

If I am wounded, it is my own negligence— never mind who did the stabbing—

the emotional brutalization,
a sexual assault,
or threatened blackmail.

I hold the invitation to peril.

They merely give what is asked for.





"to the wife of the man who is married to the revolution, from the other martyr."

i don't know what you did to earn the devotion of such a beautiful creature, to have him lay down at your feet, short of the altar. i suppose my accidental knife work looked too much like his mother— it's better to suffer for gunfire love than be left with the dagger of solitude. we don't choose our demons but we do choose the ones we'll keep and i know both of us look like the ones we grew up with. me, a little less so though.

sometimes i wish i had shown up first. sometimes i wish i had met him long before we were ready to meet each other. but this perhaps, it was fated the way the branches had bent. i will always be the younger, the just barely in time, the little too late, the last one to the show—miserable, gossamer and gaunt for unnameable things. i will always be the fleeting, ever frivolous.

you showed up to the event early— glittering golden in beauty and seductive in sunk cost fallacy. it didn't matter how many words i gave him, it was never enough. and i was never going to fix any of us, no matter how valiant my attempts were. but no matter. sheath your claws. i hope you love that legend the way he deserves. i hope you surpass my icarus wings. i hope you triple me in personhood and exceed whatever successes i acquire. i hope your fists never bruise his skin again and your words never become wounds again. and god, i hope to the very death of me, you put his happiness first. because it seems the first time around, by all accounts, neither of us could fucking do that right.

"The Knives You're Holding Won't Make You Happy, But They Will Hurt All of Us."

Memories of us come in waves. My understanding of events, completely warped of order. Chronology is not my strong suit. I wear dresses better. Chromatics evade me. The music of life is not a well oiled orchestra to my unkind ear. It's always been like that though. Sometimes it's worse than other times.

It feels like just yesterday we were at the beach. And I wrote that poem about [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

I read his letters over and over again. I read all of him—written and unwritten. I do it like a starving dog. If there was one thing in that man that made me anything, it was that he reminded me of my insatiability. I starve for him still.

She speaks the language of flowers, the ones with thorns. I still hear it in my dreams.

The daggers sit in my spine. We are both still holding them, digging them deeper, paralyzing me. You must be happy that I'm hurt. I take no pleasure in your pain. Perhaps that's the major difference between you and I. Your misery is my misery. But my misery becomes your joy. No wonder he and I got along so well. Two martyrs, two sacrificial lambs. But the truth of it is, every act of harm only comes back. We are all lying on the altar, lying one over the other, and bleeding together.



I Saw This Checklist and Decided to see if the Shoe Fits.

- stifling your own needs
- finding authentic self expression challenging
- flying under the radar
- having trouble saying “no”
- over apologizing
- holding back opinions or preferences that might seem controversial
- experiencing chronic pain or illness
- having depression, which can be linked with trauma
- trouble with personal boundaries
- assuming responsibility for the emotional reactions and responses of others
- fixing or rescuing people from their problems
- attempting to control other's choices to maintain a sense of emotional safety
- denying your own discomfort, complaints, pain, needs, and wants
- changing your preferences to align with others

This was for a trauma response known as the “fawn response”. Well. I suppose I can bring this one up to my therapist because you sure did bring it out of me.

“A Phone Call in The Psych Ward.”

It is a large black and silver box with chunky silver buttons, hanging from the wall. I'm calling you from the psych ward. The phone sits heavy in my hand. The dial tone sounds ancient. I press the pad of my solemn extremity into the intimate machine. Beep. beep. Beep. beep. Beep. beep. The wire hangs awkwardly. The green sofa chair I sit in is just comfortable enough. Ringing. Ringing. You pick up and I am delighted.

We begin and the swell of my heart blooms with life, like the nests of birds in spring . The conversation of many rivers. Always. We discuss everything. My heart is hurting but as I hold your voice so close, it is soothed. .

Well everything but the elephant clogging the wires between somewhere in Maryland and Tulsa, Oklahoma.

But the elephant is getting impatient. It is starting to trumpet. It stamps its foot on my chest. You are the first to motion at it.

“Iris... we need to talk about you and [REDACTED]”

“Right...” I sigh deeply.

You sigh in a similar manner. I softly smile at that. Even if we are both weary, we are weary together. We are two comrades in conspiracy. Two partners in crime. Trying to dig our way out of this war. Even if this is difficult, I feel at ease knowing that whatever it is— I am undoubtedly entangled with everything about you.

“You've called everyone in the polycule except her.”

“Yes... but to be fair I... need some space.”

I can hear you grimace over the phone and with a slight rising panicked tone respond. You laugh uneasily. I can practically see you in your favorite baseball cap, your glasses, the scruff of your beard. I can see you tilting with your head, your broad shoulders rock back and forth in that action, your blue eyes squinting in discomfort.

“Haha...well I don't know how much more space she can take.”

“....She's the reason I'm here. I-I'm trying to process what she did to me, which caused all this.”

“I know, and I'm not trying to excuse what she did but... it just feels like...you're holding on to this one thing.”

"What do you mean?"

"It...it just feels like—it feels like you're... just holding this *one* mistake over her head."

Mistake. A mistake. I don't know it yet, but this sentence will echo in my head for the next years, centuries, eons of my life. This sentence I remember with the most clarity.

"Mistake?" I say slowly. I am entering a state of numb disbelief.

"Yeah, it feels like... you know she just messed up this *one* time, and you're intent on *holding this grudge* against her. She made a mistake, Iris. But now she learned her lesson, and she's sorry." The conviction in your voice grows with each statement.

My head is reeling more with each follow up sentence. Your clarifications to what you desired to convey are not helpful or comforting, nor are they true to what my emotions are. I feel a tightness in my throat and chest. Because that's not how I feel about any of this. Because I am not actually someone who holds grudges.

For someone who claims to know me so deeply, I have never felt so unseen by a partner.

The tightness grows worse with each stammering beat. I choose to ignore it.

"* █ ... I... I am not holding a grudge against her."

"...It kind of feels like you are, Iris."

"No... I don't have any hatred for her actions against me, and I don't want her to suffer... but I'm suffering too. This was traumatizing for me."

"This was traumatizing for...me. This was... incredibly traumatizing for both of us. I don't think I told you but after that night, after we went out and then saw what you posted—w-we—" You choked up. Pause. Collected yourself.

"...When we realized that you could've been dead. Iris. We just... cried. I don't think either of us have ever cried harder. I thought I truly died myself, that day. I have...never felt so much despair in my entire existence. The thought that you... you were gone. It broke me."

I am tearing up myself, but also still reeling from the other things you said previously. There are too many emotions to parse at this moment. I can now just barely disentangle them in the present. It was guilt. It was shock. It was...a thousand sparkling agonies, blinding in their harsh fluorescence.

"And she *has* changed. She's been doing so much better. This was a slip-up, Iris. She messed up but...she's improved *so much*, and I do not say this lightly. May I remind you that in the beginning, if there ever was a fight— she would lash out violently . In fact, when █ and I first started dating, there were... constant fights. I've seen her improve, remarkably. After... the incident she started taking her meds. Her mood swings were nothing like they were before. She no longer uses physical violence..."

There's a sense of surrealism to this conversation, I vaguely disassociate, drifting slightly upward towards the ceiling.

And you?

Well.

You continue on, back to that very logical manner of yours, a database for everything she's done, charting her progress like a doctor. Because you know what must be done to "cure" her... right? You're the doctor. And you know what's best for both of us. Nevermind that I'm the one in the psych ward.

"You know *she feels guilty*, Iris. In fact, I don't think I've ever seen her express so thoroughly... such remorse for her actions. The fact that she's had such a difficult time when normally, she would just... well she wouldn't intentionally gaslight me... but she would not remember. This time, she is present. She is truly, truly regretful. She has been *severely* traumatized by all of this— to the degree that her nightmares have come back . Honestly ..."

You paused with heavy emphasis, collecting some more thoughts. Meanwhile, I am not collected. I am scattered in a thousand directions, a compass with no fixture.

"...you just need to talk to her, Iris. She deserves another chance. She needs to hear from you. It was a mistake."

Heat rushes in my cheeks. I try my best to speak calmly. I am ignoring the slashing motion in my ribcage, the blood on the floor.

"I am not saying she doesn't deserve second chances...but I deserve... to not be treated that way, █. I deserve to not be denigrated, and emotionally abused. I don't deserve to be subjected to what is... objectively abusive behavior."

I have lost my memory at this point but these are the other phrases that reverberate, endlessly, little barbs of the past that pierce the present.

Snapshot one.

"Iris.... That is just something she does. You can't take her seriously..."

Snapshot two.

"She's done ..way worse than that to me."

I replied with "███████████, she shouldn't have done any of those things to you either, you deserve so much better."

And then,

"...Maybe...maybe I didn't deserve those things."

A breakthrough? Not for long.

There's a blur here, we go back and forth repeating, reiterating these same points in different ways. I hear the abrasive swing of my father's hammer-like tendency. It repeats the same drumming inside me. Hammer the point home. Swing, hit. Swing, hit. I will eventually capitulate.

Snapshot three.

I stop you at one point, suddenly, the words, unthinkingly leaving my mouth, a valiant last stand.

"I tried to *kill* myself, ██████████. I'm literally in the Psych ward due to her actions."

"Yes, yes I'm not denying that. I just don't think it's fair to her-"

....another gap here.

"What can we do then?" Your voice, kindling somewhere, tinged between crimson desperation and tired resignation.

I think. A fraction of a flutter goes by.

"Well," I say, shifting positions in the sofa chair, "She could write me an apology letter... that would be something that would mean

alot to me." I say this with hope. I say this earnestly, a precipice of sunlight I balance precariously on.

You sigh again, but this is not a sigh on my side. This is a sigh that isn't in favor of this idea. This is a frustrated sigh, born of reluctance and irritation. I hear my father in this sigh. Internally, I crumple. I will acquiesce. And so the cliff tumbles, my freshly dulled heart pulses in disjointed and shattered increments.

"And what? She writes it and I transcribe it to you over the phone? This is ridiculous, Iris. You know that's too much to ask of her. That's not her... thing. We both know that's something she wouldn't feel comfortable doing. You need to reach out to her first."

My heart is a proper nail, sunken, defeated, into the desired spot.



In the end, we compromise. I won't have to call... but I will write *her* a letter to soothe *her* ailing heart.

You don't ask much more about mine.

"A Phone Call In The Painting Studio."

My father called.

"She's trying. And you know what? I don't see you trying at all. Talk to her."

And

"You could at least try to see things from her perspective, how she's feeling. Have you considered how she feels? She's so hurt."

I shake. My heart spills, bloody, my voice distorted and unrecognizable with pain, with rage, “D-did she consider how I felt when she was choking me out on the floor?!”

“DON’T YOU DARE, DON’T YOU DARE, I KNOW YOU WERE ABUSED, TRYING TO GUILT ME-”

The memory of the rest is in fragments. Tears stream down my face. I heave.

I throw chairs around the studio after the call. I topple easels. I punch the lockers. I do it until my fists are bruised. The sounds echo through the empty hallways. I am the only occupant in this space. The dark studio is my battleground, with no enemies in sight.

I collapse, limp, numb, unfeeling—except for the cold press of the tile floor.

I stay there.

I stay there for a long time.

A poem, its pen, and the aftermath.

“I’ve been everywhere and nowhere really. Somehow I traipsed over and stumbled just for you to catch me. It was love at first essay. It was love at first incident, at first words. It was love at first ever and everything. It’s a horribly beautiful thing that only grew deeper. I love you and I’m so so goddamn sick with it. I love you and nothing I do or say seems to convince you of that. My adoration is a useless broken cry in the night. I love you like I didn’t know how to breathe until you showed me. I love you like you never told me you felt I discarded you. I love you with every single drop of crimson ink in this absurd flow of life. I love you, like an anatomy book of joy, like I have names for every dead thing you revived inside me and had the bravery to put back into the earth. I love you like the audacity of covalent bonds in the universe. I love you like you taught me physics instead of whatever excuse for an education I failed to get a diploma for. I love you and you left. I love you and I’m sorry for my faults. I love you and I’m sorry it’s so difficult to understand me. If I repeat it enough, maybe I’ll be okay again. So here, I surrender, poorly, a disturbed broken confession from a creature who dwells in dictionaries: all the languages and words of the world, all the beauty I could offer, all the art—it all meant *nothing, nothing, nothing* to me to learn them if they never got you to stay.” — **“Falling for the Martyr”**



The rot of what I have and what I lost permeates every inch of wherever I dwell. I keep returning to self immolation. I keep becoming the arsonist. I keep lighting another, and another, until I am burned and charred and my lungs can do nothing but ache. The kindling always beckons, the gasoline always so soothing, and suddenly I’m flirting with wreckage again.

I fell into anarchism and I fell into you. I fell into hope and despair and the ribbon whirlpool both of those feelings offer. I sit in the broken bathtub that the landlord will never fix and feel empty. My papa was dying. My job was killing me. Our girlfriend was killing me. Everything was dying—I was dying a thousand little moments. And with that, I was killing you. I’m sorry for killing both of us. No, I shouldn’t say that. Everyone around me says it wasn’t my fault. I go back and forth between believing that and thinking that I should’ve tried a noose because the alcohol didn’t work. No, the noose would not have worked. No rope, the trees are too tall and I am quite shy of reaching the branches. Lucky for the trees I suppose. Lucky for all of us, if luck had anything to do with it.

But really, this isn’t about luck.



I wonder if you see me now, what you’ll notice. Like the fact I cut my hair short, and made it all dark again by cutting off the highlighted ends, the way you like it. Do you think about me? Do you see the projects I’ve made, all the little animal drawings and do you find enough of me in them—the me that you loved? Don’t you want to reach back, and pull her out, and kiss her? Don’t you miss my hips and the way your hands wrapped around them? Don’t you miss the long nights, the sleepless nights, we claimed? Just conversing about everything and nothing and fire and revolution. I could’ve died a happy person on any of those nights. Don’t you remember falling deeply and madly in love? Don’t you remember writing that beautiful piece about me? I can’t read it now, without crying oceans. I miss you. Instead, it seems like we just missed each other.

I am a trillion star points of different feelings and wants. One of the largest constellations is that I want to forsake my pride, throw my dignity to the wind, and beg for you back. Another one says I want to run away, never to be seen or heard from again.

Would it be so wrong to ask for a tender embrace? To have your lips grace the shutters of my eyes and tell me you love me, once more?

Why did goodbye have to be over such an absurd little website? I guess it’s poetic that it ends the way it starts. Why are the stipulations that we cannot talk ever again? I love you. I love you. I love you. I hope... at the very least. You both are happy. And

that maybe, you think of me kindly from time to time. I tried writing something dazzling but I'm at a loss.

There's no poetry in this anymore.

There's just an empty space where you should be.



I can admit in a small place, that perhaps, it is better that we are apart in some ways. I see that space will always be lacking as long as you're gone. There's always a space in my heart, in my arms, anywhere I am— that cannot be filled by anyone or anything else but you. But in this loss, it is still beautiful. It is important that you existed in whatever way you could in my life. I will cherish the good in you, and the good we made.

But I have to admit, in some ways, I was stifled. By trying to meet your demands, and realizing I was always failing, which inspired a great self loathing. That no matter what I tried to do, I'd ultimately be unable to soothe your fears and assuage your insecurities. I was trying, always trying hard, to make everyone happy. And now?

I don't think it's about happiness, yours or mine. It's about cultivating a garden that I wouldn't mind spending hours in. It's about making a house a home. It's about giving grace to myself, even when the people close or far from me refuse to. It's about fighting the notion that love is all about suffering and can only be about suffering. That is only half of the equation. It's about having the audacity to wake up, and try again—to demand and desire beauty, euphoria, delight, connection, and brilliance for the world, to make rebellion into a madly romantic thing—despite the devastation.

It's come to me, out of breath, and daring to shine behind the mist. It reaches out and touches the breeze. It is this:

Even if it is all for naught, and every kind action is pointless in the face of the death machine...it doesn't matter. Because I will fight until my dying breath for beauty, the ecology, care, & expanding the scope of what humans should be dictated by— for more than greed & profit. For more than only suffering.

I do this because in my heart of hearts I believe in a better world. It won't come easy, but it starts with a seed. And if that better world begins and ends with me, so be it.

Trying in the face of hopelessness—to spit in the face of despair, to care harder, to hold tenderness, to make beauty...even knowing the worst?

That is brave.

That is always worth doing.

(And I will do it. With or without you.)

**Affirmations, Well Wishes, and Prayers of Daily Inspiration of Mutiny
for the Average Atomized Soul, Caught Between The Machine and The
Void, Striving to Become The Absurd Hero in An Absurd World.**

May the fangs you choose incite both fear and annihilating desire in the hearts of enemies.

May the worst wounds inspire you to embrace humanity harder in ardent rebellion, and to craft your heart into somewhere worth being.

May the wings you covet begin to take shape in your utmost Becoming.

May the skies darken when you need a cleansing rain.

May your skin shed anew to reveal its amazing capacity for both immaculate continuity and the grace and horror of being mortal. May you cherish both of these odd facets of life.

May the demons you've been given, grow to be nurtured and may your grief become whatever it needs to be in the given time— sword, pen or other instruments of healing.

May the gentleness of the world not escape your perceptions. Let them be cherished. May the cruelty of the systems at hand, lead you not to despair, but greater fervor to reject replication.

May the iridescence take hold and transfigure you—rhapsodically rhizomatic.

May your abusers either repent and repair or... become ash of the most glorious fires.

May the rot become fertile soil to grow new things.





“Unsolicited advice”

The world has made us weary and it's okay to be sick of it. It's okay to rest. It's okay to cry. Let the grief happen but don't let it paralyze you.

Let's start small.

Try at least one small movement. Wherever you can. A deep breath. Do that once a day. Twice a day.

Learn a new skill. Apply it radically, and apply it with ineptness. Remember that you are the Learner. And that role is a beautiful role to carry throughout life. It means you have the most beautiful thing about humanity: The gift to adapt, to change, to Become. It will thread itself through your mind one day—suddenly, a bit of mastery. Learn another new skill. Add it in—5 minutes a day, then 10 minutes, then 15, then 30, then an hour. You're building a new world inside you. Now apply that one. Remember and repeat.

Acquire what compels you. Sink into obsessions, and reignite that hunger. The spark of inspiration and fascination. All of this to remind you that life is not just suffering, we've just structured everything that way, we've structured everything around profit, and not our own god damn lives—and it doesn't have to fucking be like this.

Revolt in small ways. Revolt in large ways. Prefigure because it's the right thing to do. Prefigure because even if it is hopeless—god dammit, at least *someone* cared enough to try. Caring in the face of an uncaring world is an act of courage, one that is a small miracle to repeat everyday. To care and consider all this, and to act with that care, is everything. Steal passion. Steal from the bastards who are killing our home. Corporations and landlords and politicians have no place here, the ones who have made Profit our king. Spit on their death machine. Reclaim yourself. Reclaim the bravery to defend the wilderness inside of you and outside of you. It all connects anyway.

Call in sick to work—the sickness is capitalism. The sickness is every hierarchy and the subsequent denigration of love and solidarity. The sickness is feeding the alienation and instead, in our courage, we will feed each other.

And you?

You marvelous opalescent Becoming, a transcendent being—you! with your awakened opalescent blood and your starlit intentions!—you could be part of the cure.

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All my love,

— Opalescence