

Loving My Middle Name

Embracing the in-betweens

by

Ruthie Kimani

Loving My Middle Name: *Embracing the in-betweens*

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This is for the wanderers, the risk-takers, the ones
learning to dance in the dark and shine in the light!

To my parents, thank you for always welcoming my
spirit of wonder and curiosity!

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Foreword

Poetry is a powerful tool—a window into the soul and mind. It reveals our deepest thoughts, lays emotions bare, and offers a space for reflection. In this collection, Ruthie Kimani masterfully weaves words into verses that resonate deeply, exploring the complexities of life with unfiltered honesty.

Through poignant storytelling and evocative imagery, she takes us on a journey—one of self-discovery, resilience, and transformation. From pain to cherished memories, from uncertainty to the freedom of surrender, and from anxious thoughts to peaceful acceptance, each piece is a testament to the depth of human experience.

This collection is an invitation—to feel, to reflect, and to embrace the ever-shifting tides of life. May you find solace in its words, courage in its truths, delight in its humor, and perhaps, a reflection of your own story within its lines.

- Halimah Menni

Writer/Editor at Emi's Writing Hub

Introduction

Ruthie Kimani is a life enthusiast, practical optimist, ecosystem builder, gifted communicator, creative, and corporate events MC/moderator/host maven. Propelled by a clear sense of purpose, she views her work as a means to uplift and positively elevate humanity. She believes in the transformative power of conversation, sparking thoughts and ideas that drive change and forge meaningful collaborations.

In this debut poetry book, "Loving My Middle Name," Ruthie delves into the heart of human experience, exploring themes from the richness of culture and the depth of narrative poems to the poignant realms of love and loss. She addresses contemporary issues with a keen eye, inviting readers on a journey into boldness and confidence, self-discovery, and affirmations.

Through her poetry and spoken word, she plays with words and thoughts, aiming to inspire new perspectives, possibilities, and paradigm shifts. Her art serves as a medium for self-expression and connection, encouraging readers to embrace all aspects of themselves—especially the weird, the unique, and the

bold. With "Loving My Middle Name," Ruthie hopes to inspire you to fully embrace your in-betweens, celebrating the multifaceted journey of life.

Courage Unbound

Ruthie's Truth

I was born on January 9th
That makes me a Capricorn and I think I have a good
idea what that means
I am me after all.

For a long time, I disliked my middle name
Especially because it felt like a placeholder
Normally, my parents would have to name me after my
paternal grandma
But my mama got there first and my parents felt it not
wise to give me the exact middle name
I have grown to love my middle name, though
To me, it goes to say I'm different
So I find myself most of the time trying to go against
the grain
You know, trying to live up to the name.

I am a sucker for bacon, it's the crisp, the crunch and a
taste I can never define
I am 151 centimetres tall,
Don't ask me how tall that is in feet; I never bothered to
convert it
And I think it's because it's a good conversation starter.

You see, you are already doing mental calculations.

I had an elephant as a pet

Talk about the elephant in the room, right?

But I just couldn't imagine why people petted dogs,
cats, and chickens.

So you can imagine the shock on my teacher's face
when she asked me to narrate about my pet

I like to think this line of thinking keeps informing why I
tend to think big

Or again, go against the grain, if you may.

I was electrocuted as a baby

I keep imagining my mum's reaction at the sight of my
little hands connected to the wall socket by a nail

And sometimes I tend to use it as an excuse of being
the way I am

As if to say, blame it on the surge of electricity in my
nerves.

I have a small attention span

Very small; in fact, I tend to wander a lot in my mind

I even wish my smart devices would record the steps I
take in my mind, I would definitely outdo y'all.

This means I get bored very easily

I think that's why I am able to move on from stuff very fast
I have to keep being entertained and I think that's why I love entertaining,
This way, I can keep up with my desires
I must admit that sometimes I listen to respond and not to understand
And sometimes I get frustrated when people listen to respond and not to understand
Talk of double standards, aye?

Hi, my name is Ruthie Kimani
I am multi-passionate, a renaissance woman, if you may
These are just better words for 'I-do-many-things'
I am the perfect definition of a master of all
And most times, people give me a wondering look
A look that says they don't know what to do with me
But the parable of the talents haunts me
So I will keep doing it all because it's my gift to God and humanity
And I am okay with that.

I enjoy laughing out loud for no reason
Talking to people animatedly
Dancing to the beat in my head

I am constantly pushing myself to step into my
greatness
I don't know much but I know we will dance a lot more
in heaven
And I will talk Moses' ear off; I can't wait for that
I know that God enjoys watching over me because it's
never a dull day
And in most mornings, I am surprised that I even woke
up
But I smile because it's God's constant reminder that
we still have a lot of work to do!

I welcome you to my world
The world of poetry
Where I share my thoughts and experiences.
I hope you get the courage to embrace all that you are
I challenge you to face the real you
I pray that you get inspired to explore all that your soul
craves.

Allow Yourself To Be Broken

There is a special kind of peace in not knowing—
Not knowing what will happen *if*...
Not knowing what will happen *if not*...

A special kind of hope,
one that whispers, "*You may not know, but...*"

I wish you would allow yourself to break—
completely, utterly, laid bare and shattered.
To bend under the force,
melt in the heat,
freeze in the cold.

Because in this malleable state,
you can be shaped,
broken and mended at will.

But if you resist,
you will explode from the pressure,
scatter into a million pieces,
and when you try to piece yourself back together,
you will not find the dust—
the fragments will not fit.

So when life presses hard against you,
I hope you surrender to the pressure.
And like clay in the potter's hands,
I hope the molding brings out the best in you.
I hope, through the crushing,
we get to taste the finest wine.

Confidence Is Not Given; It's Taken

I get asked, "How did you become this confident?"
To which I shrug, "I don't know what you mean."
"You know, the way you exude boldness,
The way you ooze courage,
'I like the way you serve fearlessness with a side of
poise,'
They say.

Dear child,
I do empathize with your thoughts—
Because no one is born confident,
Nor are we born afraid.
Not to throw shade on your experiences,
But while your experiences taught you to cower in the
shadows,
To blanket your light and protect your shimmer,
Mine threw me into the deep end.

They taught me that the fire could burn.
But I had a choice:
To either be the ashes,
Or rise like a phoenix.
Life gave me blacksmiths as parents—

Which meant hammering and bending into strong metal.

Then, ironclad experiences sharpened me.

I guess it's true when they say iron sharpens iron—

Because, dear child,

I have learned to bend and flow,

Like water, I take the shape of my container

But never lose sight of who I am.

Dear child, like water,

I want to tell you that my knees still buckle when I stand in front of people,

But I do it anyway.

Butterflies go in a frenzy every time I'm tasked to speak,

But I promise them a treat right after.

I even imagine tripping on the microphone wire on my way to the stage,

But I quickly weave a good icebreaker:

"What a way to make an entrance, right?!"

So when life boos and heckles at you,

You have a choice—

Learn or lose.

And each choice has its consequences.

So forgive me if I shrug when you ask,

"How did you become this confident?"

Because most times, I wonder,
Are you a phoenix or ash?
Would you be willing to go through the bend and
hammer?
Because confidence is not given, it's taken!

Crowd Of One

Clap.

Clap, clap.

Clap, clap, clap.

Applause, clap, applause.

Standing ovation, applause.

These have become my mottos.

I learned early on that it takes one to form a crowd—

That I'd need to be the one clapping, applauding,

Even standing for myself,

When no one was clapping,

Especially when no one was clapping, applauding.

Let's not even go to the standing ovation,

Because before the crowd gathers for a glimpse,

It's a constant pat-myself-on-the-back.

"Yes, girl!" "You've got this!" "You're it!"

Kind of applause.

And what I'm trying to say is this—

It's enough if all you have is a crowd of one.

Dear Child... Don't Let Them

Dear child,
Don't let them break your resolve.
Don't let their noise drown your thoughts,
For your thoughts are sacred to you.

So don't let them win,
Because that's when you'll have lost.

Dear child,
When they ask you to jump,
Instead of asking, "How high?"
I hope you'll have the courage to ask, "Why?"
Please, don't let them dictate your stride.

Dear child,
When the beat rises in your head,
I hope you won't silence it—
But surrender to the shake, the move, the dance.
Don't let them dictate your vibration.

Down! Not Out

He might be deserving of the kicks.
The constant blows, pushes, and punches,
The bleeding, gushing, clotting, and oozing,
The purplish-greenish-bluish-reddish maps on his
body,
The squeaks, ouches, and hisses every time he took a
breath—
All a cocktail of the life he had chosen,
The life that constantly gut-punched him,
As he choked on his Adam's apple.

He might be deserving of the fall,
Every time he tried to look up, eyes soiled,
Skin soaked with murky experiences,
Sweat covering his whole existence.
Heart beating fast and frantic,
But it was his whole demeanour that raised eyebrows.
We always thought, "This is it."
He will finally get the rest he needs.
He will succumb to his circumstances.
This time, he might choose to kick back.

It was the side-eyes, the down-eyes,
But he used his up-eyes.

With his dark claws, he reached for the first rung,
With nimble feet, he pushed himself off the dirt.
With a painful hiss through his teeth, he took a breath.
In one wince, he flexed his muscles.
In a crack, his knees supported his weight.
In one flip, he shook off the dust from his face.
As we looked down, waiting for his body to give out,
He took on the next rung,
And soon he surfaced.
He stood as a testimony.
He was down! Not out.

I Didn't Wake Up Like This

You see a soulful creature so full of life,

But I didn't wake up like this.

In fact, it took a supernatural power and muscle to get me out of bed.

You see a confident human brimming with boldness,

But I didn't wake up like this.

In fact, it took every ounce of strength just to stand this morning.

You see a talented and gifted person,

But I didn't wake up like this.

In fact, it took long hours of practice,
And failure after failure to get to this.

You see me laughing so often,

But I didn't wake up like this.

In fact, it took me ages to find the light at the end of the tunnel.

Laugh Out Loud

I am a living testament of loud laughter,
A guffaw that erupts from the pits of my soul,
I tend to laugh hugely and loudly
As if to extract any sadness that might have taken root
In the fibres of my existence.

What Would It Take For You To Believe That You're Amazing?

You won one of the greatest battles
And emerged a winner among 300 million plus others.
Yet you wallow in mediocrity,
And dance with complacency, as if it were a sibling.

You keep showing up, day after day,
And you even have the guts to show your face,
After being kicked down time after time.
Yet you still want to hide your brilliance
And dwell with the wind that threatens to blow out
your candle.

You are simply a work of art,
A perfect sculpture, exuding your maker's vision—
Yet you want to 'upgrade' parts of you,
That you 'think' should have been better,
As if you could improve on perfection.

You are strong,
A true definition of grit and resilience.
Yet you still believe those who look down upon you,
And cowardly look up to them, as if they know better.

You are amazing,
A unique gift at this time.
Yet you still need affirmation to see it.
A question lingers in my mind—
What would it take for you to believe that you are
amazing?

When They Say I'm Selfish...

I say they're right—
Because I think there's a thin line
Between self-love and selflessness,
And most times, I criss-cross that fence,
Falling on either side.

"Which side?" they ask.
To which I answer, "The side that feels like home."
"So, which side is home?" they persist.
"The one where your questions cease,
And your curiosity is put to rest."

They nod as a sign of acceptance—
As if to say, "Way to go, you chose right."

So when they say I'm selfish,
I think they're right—
Because selfish doesn't mean not being at their beck
and call,
But over time, it has meant keeping me from me.

So when they now say I am selfish,
I nod, as a sign of acceptance,

As if to say they're right—

Because being selfish now means I get to be who I fully
am.

And if that makes them think I am selfish,

Then, yes, they're right!

Timeless Simplicity

I have a place for timeless simplicity—
The perfect illusion,
The mirage of hope,
An undisputed ground,
Of endless promises,
Of countless imaginations.

I wake in that place,
Full of creative visualizations,
With mind-blowing attitudes
And nail-biting experiences—
A mirage of hope,
Timeless simplicity.

(Ambigram poem - can be recited with ascent and descent.)

Who Is Right?!

They say I view myself through introspection,
They say I view them through extrospection.
I don't know if they're right.
I don't even understand what they mean.
They tell me I'm in denial,
I say I am honest.
Who is right?

I am confused.
I have let them ruffle my feathers.
I have allowed them to get under my skin,
Invade my space,
My haven, my place of rest.
I am no longer comfortable in my skin.
How did this happen?
They say I'm easygoing.
I say I'm quite accommodating.
Where is the line?
Who is right?

Am I easily riled up?
Am I easily influenced?
What does "easygoing" mean?
I thought I had set clear boundaries.

I thought I knew where I had drawn the lines.
Who is right?!

I know... I know...
I should do that which pleases me,
I should reflect on my beauty
I should define what beauty is, according to *my* eyes.
What I see is different from what they see.
I choose to draw the lines with my ink.
I will choose to define what I want.
I will choose to cover or uncover my wounds.
I will. I will.
But for this moment, just this second—
Allow me to unmask,
Allow me to be what I want,
Allow me to bask,
Allow me to reflect on—
Who is right?

One Life!

Walking through these corridors,
I'm met with a familiar sense of wonder—
A wave of worry,
Then the sharp, pungent scent.
The kind everyone knows.
The smell of things old,
Of stories untold.

It's full of regrets.
Regrets of choices not made,
Of paths I once chose,
And wishes that linger in the air.

I deceive myself into thinking,
What if I'd chosen differently?
But deep down, I know—
Even with the hindsight I have now
I'd still choose the same.
And that thought worries me.

We all wonder if we could have chosen better.
But looking back,
I know I could have made more informed decisions—
Still, who's to say they'd have been different?

These corridors reek of disappointment,
Spiced with anger—
A scent that makes my blood boil,
Threatening to tear my heart apart.

I walk slowly,
Not briskly, but with anger,
Anger that can't erase the weight
Of choices made long ago.

But in this bittersweet haze,
I pause.
What if, just this once,
I could go back and make the "better" choice?
There's peace in that thought—
A glimmer of hope
That this moment could be my chance
To make the right decision.

Yet memories flood in—
Moments of joy
Born from the consequences of past choices.
I smile,
And in that quiet moment, I wonder:
Could the other choice have brought me this joy?

I shake my head.
One life.

I walk on,
Briskly now,
Not with anger,
But with a deep sense of relief.
I don't need to stay stuck.
I can forge a new path.

I take a turn,
Entering a new corridor,
With new choices ahead.
The circumstances haven't changed,
But the possibilities do.

And then a whisper,
Soft but clear:
One life. What do you choose today?

Heartstrings & Farewells

26 Letters Of A Beautiful Mess

Aye, love,
Beautiful as ever, you glow—
Coated in colour,
Disguising your true beauty while
Exemplifying a goddess
Full of exceptional
Glow,
Humming as you sashay,
Indescribable
Joy lighting
Kindred spirits.
Lo, behold the
Murk—
Naught but chaos
On the
Path you walk,
Quietly
Receding back to loneliness as
Spirits bombard your sleep. So
Tonight, like every other night,
Ululations tear at your
Very promising laugh,
With stories of how you dwindle the

X marks on your back—

Your life, a mess, with

Zero tolerance for anything that glows around you.

Afraid

As the smoke dissipates,
I'm scared
As I let go,
I'm afraid
As I unfold my palm,
I'm afraid
As you let go,
I'm afraid.

I'm afraid of being uncomfortable
I'm afraid that if I lose you I will be weak
I'm afraid of the void that will be left
I'm afraid of the loneliness
I'm afraid of the pain
I'm afraid that I won't be able to lick the wounds
Afraid that the light won't come in
Afraid of being afraid.

I was afraid of the toxicity yet I condoned it
I was afraid of being alone yet I was still unhappy
I was afraid of admitting that I wasn't happy with you
I held onto the fear for it felt like home
People warned me against holding on to you

But how do you let go of home?
How do you let go of some highs?

I was high
I was always high when with you
I liked the high
I knew the high was dangerous
I always looked forward to the high
The high helped me escape
I longed for these escapes, only to come down from the
high a few seconds later.

Now I'm all alone
I'm afraid that I might find a better life without you
I'm afraid to let go of the familiar
Now as I close the door behind you,
I'm left afraid that I might regret the highs
I'm left afraid that I will curse you
I'm afraid of the next time we meet
I'm afraid I don't know what I will say to you.

For now, I have to embrace the fright
Allow me to be afraid
Allow me to stay afraid, for that's the only way I know
how to survive.

Used To...

I used to be ashamed of tears

The thought that they made me seem weak

The impression of vulnerability

Now I can't seem to hide it when I shed a tear

Because I know being vulnerable is relatable

Now it enhances my self-expression.

Love Language

They keep asking me,
"What is your love language?"
I keep staring at them
Then for a moment, I ask them to list the universally
known
I tend to think
I can see the impatience on their faces
But I feel like they already have an idea
But never consider it
Sometimes it's quality time
Other times, it's acts of kindness
But deep down, I know what my love language is;
To allow them to be themselves in my presence
And I can only hope they will, even as we part!

Dearest Stranger

I am amazed that it has come to this
You and I are just strangers
Amidst all these people, just strangers
In a world driven by technology, strange
Where we ought to connect in a tap or click
But now I click and shake my head,
I tap with anxiety
And the funny thing is that anxiety doesn't knock
She doesn't know when to come in
Or when to go out, strange
Strange world it has become without you!

Pain

I have known pain
Felt pain
Smelt pain
Tasted pain
Seen pain
Heard pain
Danced with pain
But with every twirl
With every sound
Every sight of pain
Every taste it left
As my nostrils flared
And the cold smothered all over me
Pain said, 'I am here.'
As if to affirm its presence
An assurance no one needs
So when pain lingered
I let myself go
As pain dug its nails into my skin
I let the itch, the scream, and the growl take over me
But pain couldn't linger
At least not for long
With every dig, my skin grew thicker

With every distaste, a sweet-smelling essence
emanated
Every time pain danced with me, my body took over
Twirling away in a tango; pain couldn't sustain
Now pain reappears
A reminder that I can't thrive without it
But never takes a hold of the whole being
As if to say, 'I am here, but not for long,'
And I have learnt to welcome her stay.

Crooked Smile

In between your smile,
Lingers a sadness I'd like to decode.
But all I see is your smile,
As if to encrypt the deep-seated sadness.

Sometimes I fight the urge to decode it,
Other times, I hope that the smile will crack—
Break into a tight-lipped frown,
And eventually, you'd let your sorrow spill,
Let it flow out, unburdened.

But you keep the crooked smile,
As if to say, "I've got this."
I realize how beautiful your smile truly is,
Even when it hides everything.

I Don't Want To Be Your Peace

Being your peace comes at a cost—
First, it's the high standards,
Then the high expectations,
The offering of solace,
The need to be a shoulder to lean on.

But what happens when my shoulder goes numb?
What if the kind of solace you need is too expensive for me?
How about the times I fall short of your expectations?
Whose toes will I step on to reach the high bars?

Baby, I'm afraid you have to be your own peace first—
So we can share in mine.

The Hardest Pill I Had To Swallow...

...wasn't you lying to me,
But me lying to myself, over and over,
Hoping, clinging, praying, needing you to see me.

But the truth was,
It was me who needed to pray, cling and hope—
To see me.

Difficult... Sometimes

You know, sometimes—
And I mean sometimes—
You might be the problem.
And you have to acknowledge that.

Sometimes, you may be the difficult one—
The toxic person you so daringly talk about.
But that's not the problem.

The problem is that you never consider it.

Thorns Have Roses

Like an alluring piece,
That drew blood and sweat from the artist,
You left my heart murky,
With indelible ink.

As you sashayed across a well-lit path,
And danced at the precipice of the flame,
You left only darkness with each step,
A thorn in the flesh.

At your own volition,
You let your beauty shimmer,
Shed light on your own darkness—
A rose among thorns.

As the pain wooed you into the abyss,
You chose blood over complacency,
But just before it was too much to handle,
You'd cry out,
A rose among thorns.

Silence

A maze with no exit,
I run in circles, with intention, but no direction.
Dense air hangs, and I come short of breath
At every thought of you—
A storm of emotions,
I am stirred and agitated by the loudness of your
silence.

Silence, I try to break free,
But you wiggle at every attempt.
Then silence follows each jab,
As if to make me suffer,
You dangle the carrot,
As if to break the silence
Only to realize it's a stick—
But then... silence.

I wish you'd walk a mile in my shoes,
Immerse yourself in my woes,
Feel my throes
As I try to break free from your jaws.
But you keep me muzzled,
While I wish you would swallow me whole,

Bury me in a promising hole—
That I may sprout as aloe,
But never drown in your silence.

What If?

What if what you admire most in me
Is the thing that intimidates you in the end?

What if the confidence in me
Is the thing that rips you apart?

What if my boldness
Is the thing that crushes your ego?

What if my wit
Is the thing that becomes the thorn in your flesh?

What if my boisterous laughter
Is the thing that triggers your trauma?

What if my free spirit
Is the thing that makes you green with envy?

What if my love
Is the thing that summons your demons?

Would You Choose You?

In moments,
In scenes,
In circumstances,
In pain,
In joy,
In growth,
In peace,
In sorrow,
In happiness—
Would you choose you?

In the moments when you find yourself in a mess,
In the scenes where you cannot recognize yourself,
In pain caused by others or yourself,
In joy that comes bouncing around,
In growth, when you sprout and stand tall,
In peaceful slumber or silence,
In sorrowful windows of the house you call home,
In the kind of happiness you keep chasing—
Would you choose you?

Innocence

In a sense
I have known all along—
That I feign innocence.
My eyes tell the tales
Of naught,
But my lips,
An instrument of sweet oblivion.

Shadows & Spotlight

A Case of Bad Shoes

The pressure has been eating you up,
As the feet which take up your space,
Walk all over—
They walk all over town,
They go to the mountains,
They visit the beach,
They take you to meet their lover—
You completely oblige.

The distance has been tiring you,
Miles and miles at a time.
While you are a faithful servant,
You needed a break.
So you felt the rough.
The tear was just automatic at this point.
In case your owner never noticed,
You let in a sip of water when they attempted to jump
over a puddle.
But it was followed by a sunny spell,
You were again left to carry the weight.

An apple a day keeps the doctor away,
But in your case, with every dusting off,

You sparkled, keeping the cobbler stayed at bay.
But the owner didn't notice your dismay,
When they hit you two against each other—
An attempt to keep the dirt away before the next trod—
And shared stories of how old you were,
So in distress, you gave in to the tear.
You could no longer tolerate the wear.

Now you sit in a corner,
Not at the top of the shelf where you once gloriously
sat.
When their feet you could no longer grace,
You became another story.
One shoe on top of the other.
They can hardly let you go.
They have no grace to sew you up,
Nor the patience to polish you up.
Discarded, you are.
A faithful servant, you remain—
But when your owner asks me to walk a mile in their
shoes,
I really hope you are not the pair they're talking about.

Being Single

A thought many cringed at,
An idea most pity
An illusion of loneliness,
Leaving one pair of footprints,
And an imprint of a lone ranger.

It is a free feeling—
Not being held accountable for your actions,
Yet being held accountable by the world,
An easy feeling marred by their expectations,
Until you have to meet for the fact.

Your biological clock's ticking," they say,
But I promised not to conform.
"Why would you want to walk alone?"
But I know, alone, I walk safely.

The beauty of turning, tossing,
All, without bumping into anyone—
Being alone, but never lonely,
Falling deeper in love with myself,
And embracing the world.

Being single is bliss—
Do not mistake this for arrogance,
Being single is necessary,
Do not mistake this as giving up on love.
For I love, and I love deeply,
Even in my singlehood.

Burn

I'm on heat—
I've been toiling,
Toiling and moiling,
Burning the midnight-night oil.
I thought this part of my life was over—
The part where I had to toil,
The part where I had to sweat to reap great fruits.

Back in primary school,
I studied hard. I excelled.
I didn't like standing when the teacher came into class; it
was tedious.
The teacher told me I had to study hard to go to
secondary school
In secondary school, you didn't need to stand when a
teacher came in—
I looked forward to this.
She said I wouldn't have to ask for permission to go to
the john.
I looked forward to this,
I burned the midnight oil.

Then came secondary school—

I was so excited! No more standing when a teacher
came in,
No more asking for permission to relieve myself.
I was told I'd do what I wanted.
Shock on me: the burn accelerated.
The fire was hotter, and I had to grasp larger content.
I had to ask for permission to relieve myself.
The teacher said I had to do this because in university, I
could do what I wanted
In university, I could choose when to go to class or not,
He said I'd be free.

So I toiled—
I burned and scorched.

I was finally free. I could finally choose when to go to
class,
I felt liberated! I could no longer burn the late-night oil
Then the burn accelerated—
This burn was new, this burn was different.
Yes, I was free,
Yes, I could relieve myself whenever,
But who knew making life-changing decisions was
hard?
This was the burn I didn't anticipate.
I had to be free but careful.

I had to study to keep my grades up, while being
careful not to sabotage myself.

I had people looking up to me.

The lecturer said this was only for a moment—

I needed to study hard, and get a job,

Then I'd be finally free.

So I burned.

I graduated, and I was finally free.

I was going to have the time of my life.

I threw a party.

I was happy.

Then came the fire. This burn was new.

This burn was scary—this was the burn that scorched
my skin.

This was the burn that made me humble.

Now I work two jobs—

I'm burning both ends of the candle.

I need to make ends meet.

To survive, I have to stand the heat.

To thrive, I need to endure the scorch

To survive, I need to burn.

Strength Is...

Sometimes strength is

The force of putting one foot in front of the other,
Not knowing whether you'll take the next step
Or stumble and fall.

Strength is

Allowing yourself to make mistakes,
Not knowing on which side of the fence you'll fall on—
Good or bad, sometimes what matters is trying.

Strength is

Allowing yourself break,
Not knowing that every piece counts
When it comes to putting yourself together.

Strength is

A shrug that says, *I don't know*,
Not caring who sees it,
But with the hope that someday you might know.

Strength is

Choosing peace and harmony with yourself,
Not knowing what impact it might have on others,

And staying true to who you are.

Strength is

Being vulnerable and showing your mess,

Not knowing who it might inspire—

With the freedom that comes from being imperfect.

In My Version of Heaven

In my version of heaven,
the musky scent of coffee wakes me up each morning—
like an alarm,
it tickles my senses.
I can almost touch the woody scent,
while my tongue can almost taste the
strength it promises,
as I hear the whistle of the pot
with my eyes.
the musky brown I behold,
I asked God to put taste and smell buds
on all my senses—
so I can enjoy it all five times,
Over and over.

Freedom

I am free.

Finally free. They helped free my soul.

My soul cried for freedom.

I always dreamt of being free—

Free from the turmoil,

The constant looking over my shoulder,

The looming feeling of being watched.

I never saw them, but I could feel their eyes on me,

Watching, scrutinizing, micro-managing.

I walked carefully,

Careful not to step on the wrong toes,

Too careful not to wear out my shoes,

Careful not to walk wrong.

At this point, I didn't know what was wrong.

Everything I did seemed wrong—

From my skin colour to the swing in my step,

The glide in my stride,

The bounce in my feet.

It was all wrong.

Now that I'm free,

I'm not sure this is what I dreamt of.

I don't think this is the freedom I longed for.
This isn't what I envisioned when I thought of freedom.
I always thought of the day I'd finally walk past them
and say hello,
Say hello, and not get a sneer, a glare, or a cold stare.

I cannot breathe, I cannot see,
I cannot dream, I cannot say hello—
With your knee on my gut,
I cannot envision.
With your knee on my gut,
I can hardly tell you what my dreams are.
I need my mama, I need to breathe,
I need to dream again.
But with your knee on my gut,
All I can dream of is the dreams left to be dreamt.

This is not what I envisioned
I envisioned a day, a perfect day—
A day when I'd walk by and you'd smile,
Tipping your head back and forth,
As a sign of acknowledgment,
As a sign of appreciation.
I wish I could tell you I'm not all black,
My insides—well, my insides look like yours,
My brain, my brain functions just as yours.

All I wished for was to be free—
To be free to play with you, study with you,
Free to know you and free to be known by you.
Then, you'd know I'm free,
A free, happy human being.

Numbness

What is it like to feel nothing?

What is the feeling when you go numb?

What is the reaction we get from being numb?

What do we do when we go numb?

Does blood flow in our numbness?

It is a prickly feeling,

Like getting thousands of injections at once.

It has happened before,

Almost rendering me immobile.

This time, I had to be brave.

I had to take a step to save the baby.

There was a fire.

My team was called in for search and rescue.

As our norm, we jumped into our boots,

Strapped in our suspenders, we zipped up our jackets,

Jumped into the engines, and started driving off.

The fire was vehement,

Something I'd never seen before.

As I jumped off the engine, I heard a baby wailing.

As the team rushed in to save people, I froze.

I froze in my spot.
My mind was already racing towards the fire,
Breaking down doors,
But my legs were glued to the ground.
I wasn't scared. I wasn't hot.
I wasn't cold.
I just froze.

Home Planet

I am not from around here,
I am not from Earth.
I hail from Yunus,
Yunus is my home planet.
I miss home.

I'm not an outcast or anything,
I just woke up on Earth.
I miss my home planet.

Earth is beautiful,
Far more beautiful than Yunus,
Far more lively than Yunus,
But I'd never live on Earth.
The noise makes me curl in a corner,
The hustle and bustle makes me want to run away.

I keep walking into people,
I keep running into folks on the streets.
I want to run away, I want to hide—
To run away from the noise,
To hide away from the people.

The people in Yunus say hello as they walk by.
The people on Earth hardly even glance at me.
The women in Yunus are always clad in boots.
The women on Earth are clad in pointed shoes.
The men in Yunus tower over the women.

Questioning

Lately, I've been asking a lot of questions—
Questioning so much,
Challenging beliefs,
Not just those of others,
But my own, too.

“Traditions are peer pressures from dead people.”
This fascinates me,
It sends jolts of electricity through my core.
I thought I was immune to peer pressure,
But what of the pressure from the dead?

My reality and perception of it contradict.
These are big words,
Ultimate, sophisticated simplicity.
I've heard of lilies and leeches,
What if my beliefs are the leeches?
How do I nurture my lilies?

Questioning my thought processes—
My feelings are valid, because they are mine,
But what are these feelings, exactly?

Sometimes I let life simply pass by,
But I hear voices telling me what I should and shouldn't
do.

I thought I could turn a deaf ear,
Or give a cold shoulder—
An icy shoulder.
But all of it crumbles,
And it's time to ask different questions.

I promise not to succumb.
I vow to stay true to self.
I pledge to ask new questions,
To challenge the answers with more questions—
The questioning, authentically, feeds my soul.

Humanity Smells Like A Rotten Egg

Humanity smells like a rotten egg,
The 'niceness' that suffocates the human spirit,
The satisfaction of the ego hungers of the smaller self,
Where smiles are plastered to rub shoulders with the
'great,'
And to savour a taste of their mindset.

Humanity smells like a rotten egg,
Especially today, when people rush to accident scenes,
Not to save lives, but to scavenge pockets,
Live vultures in a dumpsite—
With a sense of 'responsibility'
But decay festers in the soulset.

Humanity smells like a rotten egg,
Where people lend a hand, and take a selfie with the
other,
In need for constant validation,
With fake-newness and the resolve to impress, Where
tooth decay is wrapped in gold—
Corrupting the healthset.

Humanity smells like a rotten egg,

When 'love' is upheld by constant hate and envy.
They say a chain is as strong as its weakest link,
But what happens when hate is the link?
When malice, deceit, and envy are termed as necessary
evils—
What becomes of the heartset?

Lost Thoughts

Where do lost thoughts go?

Is there a hidden pocket in the crevices of our brains,

Or a bucket overflowing with a list of lost-but-found

Where they...

Anyway 😊

Things People Don't Say Out Loud

1. **We who pay to see you**

Yes! We who wear spectacles...
We know our extra eyes look good.
We welcome your compliments.
But if we're not that close,
Please don't ask us to remove them
Just so you have a closer look.
If we are close, we don't mind—
But please, don't touch the lenses!
They're the windows to the world,
And cleaning them takes work—
A lot of blowing, searching for clean cotton,
And wiping with the utmost care.
Be kind!

2. **We Sweet Toothed**

We know the sugar's bad
But it takes effort to maintain our sugar levels!
Don't comment on our sweetness—
And please, no side eyes when we add
An extra spoon of sugar to our tea.
We're baffled at how you drink it plain,
But do we voice our thoughts?

Leave us be!

3. The Natural Hair Babes

Please understand that some of us have little to no
energies,

To keep up with the naturalistic tendencies,

When we actually tell you your hair looks good

Just say, "Yes and thank you!"

Is the 'I don't use heat. I don't add braids. I use
protective styles. I don't comb my hair. I use natural
oils.' necessary?

Not unless we've asked you what you do to maintain
your hair,

The unnecessary and unsolicited advice doesn't sit well
with us.

We are not our hair.

Take the compliments and keep your peace.

4. To Baby Posters

You who post your babies with big emojis on their
faces,

I beg ooh...

I have no child of my own and I should probably mind
my own business on this

But just think how "Happy birthday, son/daughter" with
a big fat emoji on them looks

The child is now five years old, and you're still at it
Please share what you're comfortable putting out there
If not, just leave it be
It irks us!

5. The Down to Earth

You know, the vertically challenged
Us short people.
We know we are short
We actually like it that way
We have learnt to appreciate our height
We actually accept and acknowledge it
But do you always have to stand next to us and
mention it?
The constant, "You're really short," "Are you growing
any shorter?" remarks are really old
Get a new line, and we'll probably be taller next time!

Roots & Rhythms

Beauty In The Broken

Sadly, it has come to this.

I am saddened by the fact that I had to do this.

It is lonely to let go of a part of me—

my identity, my power.

I am in pain and distress,

worried about what my future holds,

so much that it frustrates me.

I have been through a lot in my life.

I have climbed high mountains,

crossed wider rivers,

walked through valleys full of hurdles.

I have jumped over fences that took a part of me.

Thorns tore through my flesh,

barbed wires fed on my blood,

I fed bits and pieces of myself to hungry beings.

But this—this is a new low,

a new blow,

a slow death.

I just cut off my right arm.

I had depended too much on it,

trusted its wisdom,

But it took advantage of me.
I compromised my morals,
went against my principles.
No one should ever do that.

I cut it off. I had to.
I have heard before:
"If your right hand makes you steal, cut it off."
I laughed at that statement before
I mocked it,
shunned any conversation that led to that direction.
But now I understand.
Now, I know I will be free.

I was too attached to it.
It led to my heartaches,
made me turn my back on friends,
on family,
but most painfully, on my beliefs.
I had to do this—I just had to.
Detaching was painful.
Detaching was lonely.
I faced my darkest moments.
But now—I'm free.

Now, I see what I missed.

I see the light.
Now, I see the beauty in friendship.
I can hardly feed myself—
it is painful, but I am free.
it is hard to let go,
but now my eyes are open.
I can give reasons why I see,
but all that matters is this:
I now see the beauty in everyone,
the beauty of creation,
the beauty in this moment,
the beauty in the broken.

Teardrops

One more mountain to climb,
one more valley to cross,
one more tear to shed.
It will be okay.
It has to be okay... right?

This time, I choose to let my tears flow.
This time, I choose not to wipe them away.
I choose to shed one more tear—
just one more—hoping against hope,
believing I will be okay.
I know I will be okay.
I trust that tomorrow will be better...
it should be better.

As I hold this glass, it holds my pain.
I had to bleed. I had to cry.
I watch as my pain sublimates,
as my fears settle in this glass.
This glass holds the promise of a better tomorrow.
I'll keep it—
not to remind me of my past,
but to remind me of the stones I've stepped on,

the stones thrown to bring me down.

To remind me of all the hurdles I've overcome.

To remind me—

I will be fine.

Grandma's Kitchen

In this room—this particular spot—
lie memories, fond memories.
Food brings people together.
Food is the one thing we all have in common.
Every evening, food brought us here—
huddled close to Grandma as she stirred her cuisine,
sweating, burning, toiling to prepare a meal for us.

Sometimes she was cranky,
other times, she hummed her favorite song.
When she burned, we peeped through the spaces
between the timber.
When she hummed, we sat close,
stretching our feet out to feel the heat on our toes.

I look up and see soot—
black, dark, stuffy, thick.
Smoke snakes its way into my nostrils,
irritating my nasal membrane.
I *should* be used to it by now,
but every time it hits, it *hits different*.
It's bitter—yes, bitter on my nose.
It stings my eyes; they water.
I cry, not from sadness, but from pain.

I rub them furiously, only to smear soot deeper into my skin.

The smoke chokes me—

I cough, not from a cold,

but because the fire breathes in this kitchen.

And yet, I wouldn't trade these moments for anything.

I look up and spot a gecko hiding,

darting across the roof as sparks dance through the chimney.

A shelf, suspended from ropes, hangs above us,
stacked with firewood—blackened by soot.

So much soot, it drops like tiny strings.

Spiders have made this kitchen their home.

Their webs, too, are coated in soot.

I once tried to clear them out,

but Grandma scolded me—

"The kitchen is home to all of us."

Call her old-fashioned, but she cares.

The fire crackles, rattling loudly.

Sparks fly.

I fold my legs, afraid of being pricked.

Grandma only laughs, shaking her head at my fear.

The food is ready.

My stomach growls, saliva pools in my mouth.

Then, I watch—baffled.

Grandma lifts the hot pan straight from the fire—
bare-handed.

Her fingers must be made of iron.

She doesn't even flinch.

We laugh it off, and she begins her stories—
stories of scolding and punishing her children,
right here, in this spot,
right here, in this kitchen—
Grandma's kitchen.

The Bus

In my home country, we look forward to the festive seasons. We travel upcountry, eager, restless, counting down the days until we see our grandparents. In my upcountry home, we look forward to the food. In my tribe, we look forward to traveling. Traveling upcountry has always been a struggle, yet I always look forward to our arrival.

We board the bus at 5:00 a.m. The people waiting are enough to fill two buses, but somehow, we all get cooped up in one. Fathers stand at the front, fighting to get in first, claiming the good seats. The elder children push in next, salvaging what remains. Then come the toddlers—crying, wailing, moaning, groaning—protesting the uncomfortable journey. The middle-aged children dart between legs, playing, giving their mothers a hard time. And the mothers—fighting to stay awake, babies strapped to their fronts, heavy backpacks weighing them down. Their arms burdened with sacks and cartons, filled with foodstuffs. Potatoes, cornmeal, maize, rice, wheat flour—depending on where you come from, the contents vary, but the load remains the same.

The bus ride is chaotic. The roads are not something to talk about. The journey is a bumpy one—jolting, swaying, endless. Noise thickens the air. Heat presses in. Stuffiness makes every breath heavy. Children complain of hunger. Mothers reprimand them, their voices laced with exhaustion. In this bus, there are people. In this bus, there are goats. In this bus, there are chickens. The conductor is a tough one, his words sharp, his patience thin. He reprimands everyone.

At the front, the men sit comfortably. I wish I was a man. I dream of being one of them. These are the ones enjoying the journey. Their banter rises above the noise, effortless, unbothered. I crane my neck, trying to catch a glimpse of their comfort. Their laughter is easy, their voices alive, their words dancing over something read in the newspaper. They seem at peace. I convince myself they are not barbaric. I convince myself.

The bus is not something I look forward to. But the bus is what gets me upcountry. The bus is the bridge between longing and arrival. I have to tolerate the bus to get to my destination. I always look forward to our arrival. Muscles cramped, neck stiff, hands and legs numb. This is what I have to endure. The bus.

Unpopular Opinion

I think we should leave a little room,
Just a teeny tiny window—
A loophole, even,
For other people's opinions.

Like noses, everyone has one,
So why not welcome perspectives?
Give space for conversation,
Allow for diversity—
And maybe, just maybe,
We'll find answers
To life's daunting questions
Or lessons hidden in experience.

Perhaps the unpopular opinion
Is the guiding light we've been chasing all along.

The Practical Feminist

I am a practical feminist.
I know—I may sound like just another activist.
I know it sounds cliché, but don't give up on me yet.
I have a reason; I have a story—
a story as to why I am a practical feminist.
But I promise you, I know where to draw the line.
I know when to include the men in the conversation.
But that's a story for another day.
Today, I will tell you why I am a feminist.

I have been in this position before—
huddled with her at the corner of this dark street.
I can't stay away from her.
I keep coming back.
She has amazing stories.
She is headstrong and resilient.
She loves sitting in the dark.
She says it helps illuminate her light.
She says she can see better in the dark.

I love her.
I look at her with glassy eyes,
tears dancing at the expanse of my vision.

She hates it when I do this, but I can't help it.

She has Alzheimer's.

She keeps forgetting my name.

But I don't mind—

because every time she sees me, her face glows,

her eyes light up,

she reflects her light onto me.

I know I might lose her soon,

but I keep coming back,

coming back to hear her stories.

Behind us is a very loud kitchen.

She owns the restaurant.

This spot is her haven.

She doesn't mind the dirt—she says it reminds her of

where she has been,

helps her appreciate the dark,

for she could easily see the light.

I have heard this story before—

her story of womanhood,

the story of how she became a woman.

She was born on silky sheets,

fed with a golden spoon,

her food served on a silver platter.
The only disadvantage—she was a girl.

A girl who brought light to her mother's eyes—
for five fleeting minutes before she passed on.
A girl whose only mistake was being born a girl.
A girl whose smile gave others hope
but also a girl who brought a frown on her father's face.
A girl whose light was so bright,
it made her father go blind.

He always blamed her for his wife's death.
Where everyone else saw beauty,
He saw pain, anguish, sorrow, and darkness.

She didn't know what to do when the monthly visitor
came knocking.
She was so frightened.
Soon, she became a woman—
a woman who loved,
but soon, love became her undoing.

She could now understand what it felt like to have life
within her.
Her father threw her to the curb.
What was once gold in her mouth

became distaste and heartache.

Many are the times she contemplated ending it.
Many are the times she considered abortion.
But the little fighter in her kicked and kicked,
reminding her of the love she once knew.

Now she owns a restaurant.
She has a daughter who works with her.
She can breathe again.
The light is back in her eyes.

I never knew her before this.
But whenever I am around her,
all I want to be is *alive*.
All I want is to breathe, live, and to *be*.

I am a practical feminist because I appreciate being
alive.
Someone just asked me what I want to be when I grow
up.
The only thing I want to be—
is *alive*.

Painted Fire

"What benefit is it to be warmed by a painted fire?"

In this life, I have met people—
different kinds of people
Some amazing, some awful, some charismatic.
The dreamers are the interesting ones.
The *hoppers* keep hoping,
The *go-getters* keep getting.

I've been around for some time—
I've seen bonfires,
and I've seen painted fires.
Sometimes, the painted fires seem real.
They are beautifully displayed on a canva—
The perfect splash of colour,
The perfect strokes, the right curves,
The perfect shading, the perfect size.

These are the ones we want to carry home.
They give us a sense of warmth, of prestige.
As they hang on our walls,
we feel warm—if only for a moment.

But many times, that's just what they are—*painted*.
Many times, that's what we have to keep going.
Many times, they help us cope.
Many times, we cling to them,
hoping for warmth that never comes..

A painted fire is like a dream.
A painted fire is like drawing your dream house.
A painted fire is like a fantasy.
A painted fire is the hope we choose.
A painted fire is like what we fall back on when we are
weary.

How can a painted fire warm us?
How can it ignite the spark within us?
How can painted fires help us thrive?
How can we make a real fire instead of a painted one?
How do we survive on something that doesn't burn?
How can a painted fire benefit us?

It's time to do the work.
It's time to light our fire.
It's time to *dare*.
It's time to dare to *be*.
It's time to dare to *live*.
It's time to execute and bring our dreams to life.

It's time to wake up from the dream and make it real—
for painted fires do not heat us.

Merriest Of Birthdays

In a world so merry, you were conceived,
With joy, they welcomed you to this earth.
On earth, you grew,
Amidst pain, worry, and sorrow,
But also joy, grace, love and merriment—
You became an emblem of light,
Like a diamond through the rough,
You sparkle and push away the dark.

In a world of joy and merriment,
We wish you a wonderful year of blessings,
Full of God's grace and abundance.
But it's the thought that God's got you,
That keeps us holding on to you,
Leaning on you and lifting you up.
With great joy, we celebrate you—
Not just the born you were born,
But your very being,
The idea of seeing a smile on your face,
And the warmth and cheer you spread.

In a world of merry and grace,
We wish you a happy birthday,

A happy life,
Abundant and beautiful,
With great joy and strength.
Our prayer and wish over you is
That you have the merriest of birthdays.

I Came Into Adulting Kicking And Screaming

I sometimes wish I never grew up because adulting
Came too fast for me—like a flash I found myself
walking
Into uncertainty, wrapped in scents and practicalities of
Adulting, but always muffled by voices of reason.
Kicking down doors without consent,
And perusing the pages I wish remain closed. so I keep
Screaming red at everything that doesn't sit well with
me!

Sorry, Not Sorry

One more had to die

One more

Just one more...

I hope this changes everything

I hope I bring about change

I hope I live on

I hope people read about me

I hope to give hope to somebody

I hope to be someone's mission.

I know, I know...

It sounds selfish

It sounds as though I am a coward

I know

I might be a coward

Is this what cowardice smells like?

Is this what bravery feels like?

What's the in-between?

What's normal?

What should I think about at this moment?

I'm sorry it had to go down like this

I'm sorry you had to know my name this way

Allow me to introduce myself,
"I am George Floyd"
I know my name sounds cool
I promise you, I'm interesting
I promise you, I had a life before this.
I am sorry that we met under these circumstances but
I'm not sorry you got to know about me.

As I kiss tar,
It tastes like hope
Sadly, I have to go down like this
But I'm hoping I can change someone's life
It might be the person whose knee is wringing my gut
It might be the loud crowd sneering and shouting at
these guys who have me bound
It might be some yellow kid
It might as well be a hopeless black African
I'm sorry that 'hope' sounds distasteful right now
But I'm not sorry that there's still hope.
I'm not sorry that I hope someone's life changes
regardless.

Thick skin? Not it!

The goal isn't to have thick skin,
But a skin that repels negativity,
A skin that toxicity can't attach to.
The goal is to have a skin that sheds the weight,
A skin that shimmers in the dark,
A skin that glows even when you're blinded by the
light.
The goal is to have a skin that radiates joy and
authenticity!

I refuse to develop a thick skin,
Because to me, it feels like lowering the bar to
accommodate mediocrity.
I do not want to have a thick skin,
Because to me, it feels like a blanket laced with your
worries, fears and insecurities.
I refuse to develop a thick skin,
Because I won't accommodate mediocrity disguised as
acceptance!

I do not want a thick skin—
It's not my style,
It doesn't fit my persona.

I won't develop a thick skin,
Because why should I carry the extra weight
Just to make you feel comfortable enough
To sneak your condescending comments
To soothe your ego?
I won't be uncomfortable to make you “comfortable”!

Ode To Motherhood

I am not a mother yet!
But it always baffles me,
How one beautiful human person has so much power—
Power to fuse, incubate, make, feed, nurture,
Power to give birth to another human being,
In a make-or-break situation,
Better yet, in a life-or-death matter.

I am not a mother yet!
But it always amazes me,
How can one beautiful soul love so much?
A love story I am yet to decipher,
A love so deep that a mother could kill if her cub was in
danger,
In a bond so strong, with no strings attached—
Better yet, a love so true that she could die in their
place.

I am not a mother yet!
But I have witnessed motherhood—
How one short, lovely woman has raised all this:
A beautifully and wonderfully made human person,

A brilliant, gifted, kind, joyful, loving and vibrant
wordsmith,
In a world full of uncertainties,
Better yet, in a world so cruel and unkind.

I am not a mother yet!
But I can tell you a little bit about motherhood—
How one side-eye can make me stop and rethink my
decisions,
A wordless communication meant to do you harm,
An understanding of how bad things could turn out for
you when we get home,
In a jiffy, I become a new person—
Better yet, a changed human person.

I am not a mother yet!
But most of us can attest to the loud pitter-patter of
slippers,
A little too early in the morning.
A constant rouse from contact between this beautiful
human being and utensils in the kitchen,
A little too loud to our liking but complaining about it
means you're up and ready for errands
In quest to remain at peace, we pull up our duvets as a
shield from the noise

Better yet, pretend to sleep in just to get a little bit of
the much needed rest.

I am not a mother yet!

But if I become one someday,

A beautiful experience it must be.

A gift to my child, I will be

I dream of paying back; you know: by wearing slippers

an inch too big to increase the

volume of the pitter-patter, fight with utensils a little bit

louder, sit on their beds when they're pretending to

pray but asleep

Better yet, sing loud and off lyrics a little bit too early in
the morning!

A Slice of Humanity

Glimmers and glimpses,
Shimmers and shreds—
A moment here,
Some moments there.
A smile a mile away,
A tender hand, just a foot away,
A slice of humanity.

A lending hand,
A receiving smile,
A jump of joy
When the heart skips a beat,
In a sweet jolt of happiness
A kind reminder of love,
A slice of humanity.

In between busy schedules,
A call to check in,
A sweet soul at the end of the line,
With no expectations, no requests—
Just a reminder that humanity exists.
In a swift moment, we break into a smile,
A slice of humanity

It doesn't take jumping over hoops,
Or climbing mountains,
Or a quick save from drowning
To remind us of kindness.
It sometimes looks like
A gentleman escorting his lady home,
Or an Uber driver waiting for you to close the gate
Before they drive off—
A slice of humanity.

The little smiles,
When a child jumps for joy when you bring candy,
The subtle nod if you hold the elevator for someone
about to miss it.
It's in the warm hug of a loved one, with a two-second
linger,
And the way you lend a hand to an elderly person
looking to cross the street—
Swift, small, unexpected actions
That give glimpses of
A slice of humanity

A Poet's Prime

In this prime season,
I want to be the poem,
Not the poet.
I want to feel the space between the words,
The hesitation as the cursor blinks.
I want to be the metaphors and examples,
To sit back and see what becomes of the cracks,
And the smile of the reader as they relate to me.

As the poem,
I want to be the dance,
Not the dancer or the beat.
I want to feel the vibration
As your muscles contract and expand.
To feel alive at the stretch and turn,
To be the reason for the sweat and burn in your body,
As you yield to the beat.

As the poem,
I want to be the story,
Not the storyteller nor the writer.
I want to see you lean in, your ears almost fanning out.
I want to see your curiosity,

And feel your heart race at the suspense.
I want to move you,
As you wonder how the story ends.

As the poem,
I want to be the heat in the fire.
Not the fire or the fuel.
I want to see you fan yourself,
As you try to adjust to the heat.
I want to see you recoil at the burn —
Yet a little more, you burn
A lesson learnt
But you still need the heat.

As the poem,
I want to be the heartbeat
Not the love or the lover.
I want to experience the rush
As you meet the one you love.
I want to feel it all:
The pulsing of blood through your veins,
The dilation of your pupils,
And to feel your skin pulsate.
I pray you are loved.

As the poem,
I want to be the dream,
Not the dreamer.
I want to experience your longing,
To be the one who dares you to think bigger.
I'd like to see the extent of your thoughts,
To feel what scares you—
Yet see, you do it anyway.
In this poem, I hope we both achieve our highest.

I Am & I Will

I Am All That

I know—I am a lot.

I see it in your eyes.

Sometimes you tell me I'm too much.

Other times, you just shrug.

But thank you.

Thank you for reminding me—

I am all that.

I Deserve...

I deserve the best life to offer.
I am deserving of peace,
Because I've known life without it.
It has consumed pieces of me,
I've fought my demons,
Pieced myself back together.
That's how I know I deserve peace.

I deserve the best life has to offer.
I am deserving of love,
Because I've lived without it.
It's been a constant rush,
Chasing after fleeting mirages.
I've learned about love bombing,
Experienced breadcrumbing.
I've seen illusions of love,
And had to teach myself to love me instead.
That's how I know I deserve love.

I deserve the best life has to offer.
I am deserving of freedom
Because I've known caging.
The struggle to spread my wings,

Shaking against invisible bars.

Dreamer

I am a dreamer.
I have intense dreams.
I can dream of anything—
Success,
Destiny,
Love,
Being loved,
Good things.

But the bad dreams come from illusions.
They say I'm delusional sometimes,
But I don't care,
As long as I can keep dreaming.
Dreams come from illusions, they say.
They say I must toil,
Burn the midnight oil,
To succeed.
They say I have to stop dreaming,
And start working.

I know they're right, to some extent.
I love my dreams.
Some scare me, while others comfort me.

Sometimes, I'm scared of dreaming.
Scared I won't live up to my dreams.
Scared all I will achieve are these dreams,
These hopes.

I love dreaming because it gives me hope.
Dreams soothe my mind,
Keep me company at night.
I am not lonely when I dream—
I escape.
Dreams help me escape.
Dreams help me hope.
Dreams keep me strong

I am a dreamer.
I sing in my dreams.
I've achieved success in my dreams.
I am loved in my dreams.
I have an audience in my dreams.

Allow me to dream some more.
Allow me to escape,
Because that's the only way I can cope.
I am a dreamer.

Put Yourself First

They constantly tell you to put yourself first—

That if you're first,

You've got to love yourself first.

If you make time for self-care,

You'll show up optimally.

If you learn to love yourself,

You'll know how to love others better.

But I ask:

How will you put yourself first,

When you're not even on the list?

Since You Are Not Me

Since you are not me,
I understand that you can't fathom
The depths of my ugly laugh—
Yes, my ugly and loud laugh.
My system digs deep to find
What you could never understand,
Since you are not me.

Since you are not me,
I can't explain why I run,
Why I keep fleeing from the ugliness—
The mess I've caused in myself and around me,

Since you are not me,
You wouldn't imagine where I stand,
Because all around me is quicksand,
Hastened by the beat of my heart every time
I remember the mess,
That led to a blessing,
A blessing I count even when you don't see it,
Since you are not me.

Since you are not me,

I won't explain why I do what I do,
Because when I do it, I gain strength—
An ounce, a pound, or even more.
I only dare to tip the scale when I look back,
But since you are not me,
You ask why I don't look back—
It's a "me" thing,
You wouldn't understand

Standing Up For Yourself

Sometimes, standing up for yourself
Might mean standing down—
And that's okay,
Because you'd have done what's best for you,
When the odds were stacked against you.
It might not make sense right then,
But one day, you'll look back
And be grateful for the sigh.

I Am ALIVE!

My identity is ALIVE

I am Alive to elevate humanity.

Most people identify as lovers of cats and dogs

Which is super okay

But I want to identify as a people-lover

I want to call out mediocrity

To break bounds

To go beyond what I perceive as my potential

To use my gifts and break the limits of human perception.

I dream of a world where we are all ALIVE

Where we don't die at 27 and are buried at 80

Where all our dreams and hopes come to life

Where the essence of who we are becomes ALIVE

I dream and live in colour

I wish we all did

I wish we could all see and believe in beauty

The beauty of our dreams

On this day, I pray to love

To love intentionally

To love till we all believe in our potential

To love till we have broken bounds
To love till we see the beauty in others
To see and believe in the beauty of their ambition
To love all of humanity.

Today,
I encourage you to be yourself
Be the loudest if you're loud
Dance even when you're out of rhythm
Dream even when societal constructs restrain you
Write, if it's the only way to express yourself
Cry when it all gets gloomy
Laugh loudest when you are happy
Breathe even when it's hard to
Just be boldly you!!

I Am Enough!

Thoughts, ideas, opinions, suggestions,
Suggestions, opinions, ideas, thoughts.
You can, you should, you will, you could be,
But don't, no, do, no, don't.
But wait—aaah, aah...
Just give it time,
You will, you can, you should, you could be.
But no, no—do, no—don't.

Aaaaaaaahh...
I am tired!
I am exhausted!
I am done!
Done with you,
Done with them,
Done with the thoughts,
Done with the ideas, opinions and suggestions

They no longer serve me.
Serve who I am,
Who I think I am.
I am not a lot,
Not a lot of what you'd expect.

Expectations of what you think I should be,
Should be, or can be.
Being me should be enough, I think.

I think I am nothing,
Nothing you should mind about.
Minding my business means I am—
I am becoming more of who I should be.
I should be enough,
Enough to all of you—
You who keep checking,
Checking on me,
Me, who never knows
Knows all I could be

I could be enough,
Enough to make you smile.
Smiling has become the order of the day—
In order to make you smile,
I thought I needed to be who you want.
But who you want me to be is not what I think I should
be.
I should be grateful—
Grateful that I am sane.
But what is sanity,
If it means that I need to break,

Break the smile?

I should be at peace,
At peace with the fact that I am here today.
But I am not,
Because you needed me to be at peace.
But I cannot be at peace
With your idea of who I am.
I should tell you that you cannot understand,
You cannot even begin to fathom
The depth of my grief—
The grief that eats me inside,
When I have to save face,
When I cannot be myself.

I hate it when you say you understand,
Because you wish you'd walked a mile in my shoes.
But how can you fit in my shoes,
When you cannot accept me for who I am?
Unless you can wear my skin,
Feel the way my heart struggles to stay in my cage,
And bear the sensitivity of my nerves—
Unless you could match the vibration of my shaking
hands
And feel the tightness of the laces on my feet—
Then how dare you!

How dare you pat my back and tell me what I could be,
should be and will be?

I can only understand my lover's embrace
When He tells me He understands,
Because He molded me.
He knows what it means to be in my shoes—
As He knows every nook and cranny of my feet.
He feels the violent beat of my heart.
When He says, "Child, I've got you,"
I know then that I AM ENOUGH!

It May Be Difficult To Love Yourself

They constantly remind you to love yourself, but **It** is impossible to keep doting on you when you **may** not have mastered the art of love, but may **be** that's when you should fall in love. When it is **difficult** to colour beyond the margins as if **to** draw an imperfect caricature that depicts **love** an illustration of what it means to dote on **yourself**.

Far From It

Oh, how I wish you saw the real me,
How I wish you would have a glimpse my life,
How I wish you could walk in my shoes,
How I wish I could share my tale,
How I wish you understood me,
How I wish you'd comprehend why I am the way I am.
How I wish you knew what I grapple with,
How I wish you'd stand in my essence—
Then you'd know
I am not the idea you have in your mind.
In fact,
I am far from it!

So, every time I look like I'm losing Hope...

I wiggle,

Shaking off the dust that has settled on my being.

I dance to the music in my head,

blazing my own path, leaving an imprint of what I am
meant to be.

I twist and turn,

unravelling the threads that shape my existence.

I look away from the thoughts and opinions laid before
me,

disconnecting the wiring that keeps me tethered to the
ordinary.

I sleep,

awakening the giant within, only to dream of what could
be.

I love deeply,

affirming my presence in the face of change and
adversity—especially in the face of it.

I Wrote A Poem Without A Title

I wrote a thoughtless poem,
A poem without a head.
It sounded like a body without a head—
No sense of direction,
No thoughts, no opinions, no questions or ideas,
Completely soul-less.

But the beauty of this poem was its freedom—
No expectations, no demands,
No criticisms, no holes to poke.
I couldn't take a jab for it,
Because it had no sense of direction,
No start, no rules, no end.
It could flow, blaze its own trail.

I warned you about this title-less poem,
Which meant I couldn't be accountable for what it said.
In the depth of inspiration, it unexpectedly took a turn—
It couldn't wander aimlessly, knew what it craved—
Some soul, some thought, some idea, some opinion.

But it still had to come up with a title,
One that represented what it was.

There was no one particular word for it,
It refused to be defined,
So it became what it wanted.
Free.

She's a Little Rough Around The Edges

She is an enigma—
but that's not all there is to her.

She may seem aggressive,
but it's only a facade.
She may poke if you get close—
but only if you're *close enough*.
She may seem too assertive—
but only if you *overthink it*.

She's a little rough around the edges,
but that's just her way of keeping the tender ones out.

She may not be your sweet neighbor next door,
but she'll drag you from hell.
She will carry you through your troubles—
but will drop you the moment you become overbearing.

She may not look sweet,
but she compensates with kindness.
She will offer you a shoulder to cry on,
but it won't be a white-crisp-shirt kind of moment.

She's a little rough around the edges—
but that's the only way she knows how to survive.

Loving Me

Loving myself means being all that I am—
Embracing the jack of all trades,
Struggling to master some,
Failing at others,
Dropping some balls,
But overall, I explore
All that my soul craves.

Own The Light

One of the hardest lessons I have learned in life
Is to step into the light—
To shine bright,
Never calibrating my glow to your eyesight.
This is the only way I know how to love me.

No

They say constantly that “No” is a full word—
That it is an answer.
Yet, they've also taught me
That sometimes
I shouldn't take “No” for an answer.
I shouldn't be content with it.
I should keep knocking, searching, seeking, finding, and
exploring.

But I'm left wondering—
When should I take the hint?
Is it when my knuckles are sore?
When my face turns red with embarrassment?
Or is it when they file a restraining order?

Since they've turned their backs on me,
I've resolved to keep my peace—
To accept my fate.
To accept “No” as an answer,

Note To Self

In ten years,
I hope you haven't lost your amazement at silly things,
Still asking the weirdest questions,
Your imagination is still wild.
I hope your heart still beats the same rhythm
When you encounter those crazy friends.
Don't let bewilderment be a thing of the past.
I hope you and your best friend have gone on all those
adventures
You talked about.

Don't lose that loud, carefree laughter.
I hope you started that company you always thought
about,
And that you found love.
How are the boys doing?
Did you meet a girl?
Please, tell her life is short—
That she should live it boldly.

I hope you still give them unsolicited advice,
Teach them the ways of life,
Show them how you lived on your own terms.

Make them understand what it means to be free.
And above all, I hope you still play hard.

Shadows

Shadows

Are cast upon my path.
As I arise, they go before me,
They mimic my step, my bounce.
As I look forward, they act as a guide.

Shadows

Soon, they stick to my side.
As I hasten my pace, they stay beside me,
As if to reassure me of a loyal companion—
A friend, even.

Shadows

They are now at my back.
As I chase peace and tranquility,
They act as bodyguards,
Cheering me on.

Shadows

As I look ahead, beside and behind,
I can no longer see them—
They've kept me company,
But now they seem to hide,

Hiding from the essence of who I've become.

It Is All in Me

I should feel different, shouldn't I?

I could be more, couldn't I?

I would be great, wouldn't I?

Questions I grapple with

As I step into a new year.

I can feel something fixing to happen,

I think I feel glimpses of hope

Faith, within my clasp

Joy, at my fingertips,

Grace, I tend to dance with.

But soon, a cloud

Of things amiss,

Of dreams far off,

Of disappointments and unmet expectations.

Allow me to cling,

As I grapple with the fine line

Between who I am and who I ought to be.

I accept the fight,

For it is all in me.

Glimmers and Glimpses

I don't know about you,
But I keep grinding,
I keep hoping,
I keep faith-ing.
Hoping to make it.

I keep longing,
Dreaming, building,
A place where I am no longer surviving,
But thrive with endless choices

I keep praying,
Unceasingly,
In quest of the good things in life.
Sometimes it feels like—
A hop, step and jump,
A thankless effort.

I keep thinking,
Praying, asking,
For a glimpse of what my life could be,
"Just a sneak peek," I say.
Hoping to work smarter or harder.

In these moments of desire,
Is when I have a glimpse of the glimmer,
And the shimmer that awaits me at the end of the
road—
A spark of something better

Many times people acknowledge my effort,
Some acknowledge my achievements.
Even those I don't consider such.
Other times, they prophesy great things over my life.
Sometimes, I think in these moments,
Where my potential is recognised by another,
Is when I have a glimpse of the glimmer,
And the shimmer that awaits me at the end of the road.

What's Your Truth?

I welcome you to explore yourself

To express yourself

To write down your truth

To embrace your weird

To treasure the downs

To love the bounce back!

