

Grief will always ask: why

©KolekaPutuma

Mourn quietly

The world does not want to hear you die

Especially when it's the one holding the revolver

Your **silence** is too loud for this noisy place

You are a tumour

You can feel it

by how they trace your loss with their squinting eyes and condolences

Their whispering makes you feel like you are something growing in all the wrong places

A thing to be removed so you can be dissected or not looked at

Wounds make people uncomfortable (you know)

There are protocols to reaching out:

Do not share a meme of your panic attacks on social media

Your 3456 friends do not know of the epilepsy that came before,

The willpower it took to pick up the phone and tell your mother

That today, it is hard.

It is sore in all the places you cannot see or wrap uh gauze around.

Do not post a selfie of your self-mutilation

God forbid, your status reveals that you are lost or breaking

No one will comment on how raw or close to healing your wound is.

And when everything yells: escape,

Do not try to scream for help while drowning,

You may lose more control that way

Do not panic in quicksand.

[Do not entertain the isolation either.]

Try to sleep.

Try to breathe.

When the memories flood your home,

Hold onto something; anything.

Try to breathe.

Try to hush the rattling in your bones.

the rumbling in your stomach

The anxiety in your chest

the

k

n

o

c

k

i
n
g

in
your
head
the grinding of your teeth
the potatoes mashed in your throat
the shedding of your skin
every time you gather the energy to pour your body in Epsom salts and hot water

I see you.

You are not here.
You scan your body through the room,
 past their gaze
 and yapping.
[They have not stopped talking]
The silence reminds them of the tumour: of you-your loss.

And everything:

The porridge making.

The sink.

The kettle.

The

walls.

The

floor

Still yell:

Escape.

Escape.

Escape.

Escape

Escape

Es—c-----pe....

Escape. Escape

Escape

You are not here.

You buried yourself with the coffin,
your spine wanting nothing more than
to
be
lowered
down,
slowly,
like your beloved.

The ground seemed like a steadier place than your hands
The ground did not look up at you in pity like their eyes did.
The ground did not shake everything it held
Even with the ghosts it buried
Even with the all the strangers that needed it to be still
It did not waver. Like your faith.

It was as if they were pouring the sand over your nostrils,
With every squeeze they placed on your shoulder as they passed by.
The pallbearers, neutral and unaffected, were the last to hold this body that you laid naked
next to, a few weeks ago.

You are mad at them; these funeral men,
They have no relationship with the deceased that they handle with such care and nonchalance
You are mad and you do not know why
Or you do . Or you don't
Either way you are still mad.

You stare at the heaps of sand around you,
The holes and memorials marked by withering flowers,
And realise how graves are just wounds and memories plastered by stones and dates.
There is another burial not too far from where you are
You can hear the wailing and singing
You do not know the family or the deceased
And whether you were standing there or here
You'd still be wearing black
With your head hung and sand clenched in your fist
The pastor is saying something.

[The pastor said a lot of things that day]
But he did not mention that there is no cure for grief.
You cannot produce an x-ray of the pain;
Where and how it hurts,

The bed does not **spit you out** in the morning,
You can only b-r---eath---e with the curtains closed.

Your face hangs and your eyes give you away.
The tea-making makes up for the lack of conversation when the visitors come,
And they will stop coming, once the mourning period (for them) has passed.
The ones who do not have a language to comfort you
Keep talking about time,
Time is a funny thing.
It does not have a chest you can pound in rage
or arms that you can grip onto when the ground beneath you feels like it is
disappearing and swallowing you at the same time
Time only meets us halfway,
It has actually given itself a head start to meet us at the

finish line

It is already here
and has already left.

In the days that follow
You wake up in a neglected routine,
Wake up orbiting
the corners of the room with your iris
You stand up,
one foot behind the other, behind the other,
until it feels normal.
You try not to call out their name by mistake
Like you did yesterday
In your sleep
Or when you were taking a bath
And thought you heard the door opening
You are digging yourself out of waiting
 And waiting
 And waiting
 And waiting
 And waiting
 And waiting
 And waiting

You are trying not to obsess over the stain on their white shirt
that just- no matter how much you scrub-won't wash out,
you remember the night it happened
why the wine spilled on it
who started the argument
How it all seems so small right now
The memories make a statue out of you
Sometimes you stand there.
In a corner. In the centre.
Fixed gaze and clenched breath,
You are stapling your thoughts together
Just in case.

Just in case.
Someone calls to ask,
“How are you?”

The **weight** in your body has no expiry date or name
Some have named it grief
But grief here,
means as much to
Sprawled limbs birthing still borns,
As bated words to slit throats.
You are mopping the surface of your tongue with a [locked jaw.]
You are uneven,
Hanging
halfway
between
the
ending
And
an
[emergency exit.]

You'd opt to be anywhere other than
Inside yourself
Living is a complicated exercise
It comes without a script or password
We are all flesh and marrow
And fleeting moments
Having all of the science and technology that could keep us alive
All of the machines that we could strap our hearts to
In case of an emergency-
The strangest things to assist us with breathing
But it's the unexpected that kills us
The death of a loved one is a kind of death
Heartbreak is a kind of death
Giving birth to a dead child is kind of death
Isn't it funny that
The maternity ward has all these posters
Preparing you on how to begin this new life with this newly born human
But no posters or brochures for when it leaves or dies
There is no ransom for a life kidnapped in exchange for eternity.
There is no bargaining with the magician;
The dove under the white cloth will not reappear;
at least not in this act.
Sometimes limbo tells these really terrible jokes
With punch lines that suck the wind out of our bellies.
We are ducking our turn on the chess board.

