

Weathered

A Collection of Prose by Sonya Singh

I did what they prescribed. I took a walk.

I strolled alongside an imaginary storyline, wondering how someone somewhere must have been on a walk the first time the word “weathered” was used. They probably saw themselves in the precipitating November skies, probably empathized with the brocade of corroding leaves. “I know what it feels like to be a perishing thing mistaken for beauty, too,” is what they would have whispered to the sky.

I must be weathered then, considering my undoing is on time and in season. Like all the other artistic outlets and transcendencies I indulge in, the personification of nature has always been an accessible avenue for self-reflection. It is simpler to label recurring memories as *Spring-like perennials* rather than Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It is easier to say *Winter* than it is to say *suicide* when there is a self-inflicted death. This process of using a naturalistic lexicon in place of stigmatised and medicalized definitions has been both cathartic and worrying. How would you feel knowing there is no beginning nor end to the ways we hurt? Maybe there is no resolution, only brave attempts to find consistency throughout the years. Maybe we all live as the seasons do; using the Earth’s axis as some sense of direction, using nature as a reminder to endure.

Melancholy (Winter)

Forget you know the word. Melancholy was a flower and that flower was a woman.

She wore overcasts like a chiffon dress and would take to the town with nothing but teardrops for currency. She invited the sun to all corners of her being, but one. She always had something between her arms and the rest of the world. Today, it is a barbed wire shawl that

collects like rivers to a lake at the crease of her forearms. “You wear your pain well,” I would tell her. For whatever reason, words arrive to me vacant, offering me the opportunity to fill them with my own experiences. Melancholy doesn’t sound like what the English language says it means. The curves of my mouth produced by its phonetics make me jovial, not sad. To that end, I have become skilled at masking my misery as if I were an azure sky on a cold day. I flaunt wounds that make even the brightest of maples envious. In doing so, I commit the act of melancholy; *to rejoice in one’s self-loss*.

I wear the seasons, in more ways than one.

The cold weather has its way of permeating us, scratching at our throats, breaking us down from the inside out. As though burnout is to the mind what Autumn is to the Earth, it seems I need a fever to knock me off my feet before I stop and breathe. I wish people had seasons, don’t you? Wouldn’t it be nice to predict when the good days were up and when the collapse was about to happen? In this one instance, nature is lucky. It has a way of forecasting its demise, whereas us humans have to endure all these spontaneous disasters on our own. For now, I have to settle with wearing maroons and mustard yellows to hide amongst the leaves. I guess we’ll have to tolerate, or eventually enjoy, the descent to the concrete, all crumpled and *worn*— a word with two iterations a considerable distance apart.

Beauty needs to bleed from somewhere; it might as well be from me.

The world won’t let me forget I am an artist. I am fated to forge my beauty, not find it. Callouses are hard works’ souvenirs. Hard things make us soft spoken. Soft music brings comfort to heavy hearts. I tell myself the weight of ivory is enough to counterbalance the stress.

The world is full of contradictions, and perhaps that can explain why there is more poetry in me than sustenance these days.

Any medium I choose —dance, photography, scrapbooking— says something about who I am, where I am, in my life. I write when I need to keep myself at a distance and I dance when I feel safe in my body. Consequently, I am a writer simply because I cannot be a dancer. Though I must admit, I miss living things. I miss how the art would fall past me so close you can feel its gravity between the cartilage of your knees. Words cannot be digested the same way movements can; they have too much hunger...yearning. So much life has been breathed into my prose, there is none left for myself. I have practically excavated my torso to house libraries, filed corpses up and down my arms on shelves. There are more metaphors on my bones than meat, more black and white in my veins than red. What I am trying to say is...I miss *being* the living thing.

Perennia (Spring)

Pain is the worst of the perennials.

Sometimes, it is the only thing I can look forward to. I save a seat for it in a chasm for two at the bottom of my stomach. I drill a hole at the end of my sternum for it to hold on like a pendant. It is akin to me, latching on stronger than vines to aged cobblestone. It is only a matter of time before the perennial memories or scars replenish themselves, and maybe by calling them perennials, they won't seem as dangerous. Maybe this is why they tell us not to name stray cats; we are more inclined to keep them and they will be more pleased to stay.

A lot of things happen on the precipice of Spring.

I am always intrigued by how the melting of a season uncovers last year's fossilized memories. All the corners of our lives —our closet, our kitchen, our childhood— have waystations where forgotten things go to collect dust. *Lostmites*, I call them, are the undestined thoughts, passions, and memorabilia that get scattered throughout time. Nothing is ever lost, only misplaced. The same is said for the mind. We find a way back to ourselves, albeit ungracefully.

There is nothing soft about Spring. To “bloom” would be a euphemism.

No, Spring makes itself heard in the wind. It demands its presence in the roaring downpours. After months of being dormant, of existing under sound-proofing snow, she howls. I am grateful to be witness to the world reclaiming itself. Fields of dandelions shamelessly erupt, filling the vacancy of colour left by a previous season, a past self. It takes everything out of us to live again, doesn't it? You don't know how much you were missed until you put light into the skies, warmth into the sun, and life into your skin again.

Even the trees that grow from cement find a way upwards.

I stop to empathize with these trees when I see them in the city or on a street corner. Born from stone, they shed the rubble like scales, stretch through the fissures of concrete, but never too far. They can hope, but never leave. Just as the trees accept grime for oxygen, we must accept that some things are intrinsic to us. Some things last, linger, remain as imprints on our hearts embroidered by thread-thin veins. Whether it be an immutable tree, a song that you can listen to for hours, or the chronic disorder you were predisposed to, there are some things that our heart recognizes before we do.

Naina (Summer)

When I say I love this place, I don't mean the setting.

I mean, I love this picturesque moment my gaze has reeled in. I love the room that my heart has chosen to walk into. The walls, painted with a hand-picked emotion. The windows, sieving the light to create dancing imprints on the floor. I have the same eyes from seven years ago, by which I mean we both honoured the sunbeams that splintered from wounded clouds. We were both entertained by a plane walking the staircase of electricity lines, or by the reflection of a storm cloud in its own puddled product on the sidewalk.

It is true what they say about the eyes and what lies behind them.

If our souls were where the world said they were, my eyes would frame a murmuration of starlings in the distance. It ebbs and flows with no purpose other than to stave off the chill of stagnancy. In fact, I often take my restless soul for walks, simply to keep it moving. To keep my spirit company and my mind on its toes, I leave my things in the car— my bag, my phone, my sanity. I wander until the loneliness subsides, almost as though the feeling lessens itself to make space for all the lonelier things around me; the picnic table at the top of the hill; the phone booth that hasn't heard a hello in decades; the stand-alone home surrounded by stronger and newer versions of itself.

To have eyes is not to have sight.

That much my grandfather knew when he would call out the Hindu word "*Naina*," beautiful eyes. I have had some of my best smiles and sighs stuck in traffic. When your breath is slow enough, the world reveals itself to you. Crickets begin to talk to the birds at noon, carrying

on their leftover conversations from the dawn chorus. Butterflies emerge from fields of white flowers, creating the illusion that the flower itself developed the ability to fly. You get a bittersweet sensation when you notice the trees of your most frequented roads have changed colours; the same feeling I had when I noticed my childhood pet started growing grey hairs. Thank god for unlucky red lights, unceasing bad luck, and things that stop time. If it were not for these “*inconveniences*,” I would not have as many memories, the things we call *life*. We are all seldom in a changing world and we all deserve to be seen more. To have our birthmark patterns be memorized, our silences be acknowledged, and our subtle quirks be appreciated.

Autonom (Autumn)

It is unfortunate I do my best writing in Autumn—

it must be the essence of unbecoming that provokes the pen. Leaf by leaf, the trees keep to their timelines, hues, and intensities of self-immolation. It is the most meticulous of all the seasons. Rituals, we all have them. For most people —and for one season— rituals are defined by a spiritual commitment to routine. For me, rituals are very much secular in the way their compulsive and destructive quality kills any modicum of faith. My thoughts, as much as they are riots of colour, could never burn as bright as Autumn. Can someone envy a season? Is it possible to desire its self-assurance, how it carefully distributes its eulogy across the horizon? Without a purposeful routine, without a *why*, all I have is Autonom. A haphazard way of living.

Birds are not the only things that murmur.

One of the most aimless species are people. And still, we both manage to create wonders, or at least that is what we have to tell ourselves. I have to remind myself that natural phenomena

still exist, otherwise I fear the possibility of becoming like my skeptic peers who believe everything is AI generated. I do not know when AI became the epitome of the surreal and breath-taking, but nature was here first. Before the world was explained away by science, nature impressed, stunned, and inspired us. What happened?

Where is the (wh)y?

If I had to guess, I would say it is submerged under the countless obligations and the pressure to perform. I have not had a decent sleep in weeks because it seems as though my dreams are someone else's too. A lot of people would describe me as a morning person, but what does that *really* mean? It does not mean I wake up refreshed, but rather I force a smile to hold up the wrinkles under my eyes like little suspenders. I wake up welcomed by dead silence, with a contrasting swell of echoes from the nearby freeway. The tranquility, sometimes mistaken as lifelessness, is soon disturbed by the chaos of the day. A part of me knows that this is the only time I have any peace and quiet to myself, so I bottle enough of it up to last me the day. I take sips of it between the packed hours of work, hoping that it is enough to remind me that I am in fact not dreaming. That I am awake, sitting here, writing to you.

Writing can be a pastime, but more importantly, it can be prophetic.

My reality forebodes that I will one day write myself out of existence. With each metaphor, I am disassembling and reassembling myself to fit an obscure image until I lose where I started the sentence from. By the time I am done with this, all you will see is a painting stippled to perfection. It is an incomparable relief when you lay your glasses on your nightstand before going to bed. Our eyes, or rather our sight, weigh us down. I cherish any scenery that can obtund

the burden of witnessing myself everyday. If I never wrote a word, would these moments still exist? If there was never an author to walk through the forests, would we still have experiences to ruminate about? If I could choose, I would rather be forgotten. That is the livelihood of a season, after all. Remaining humble in its transient existence because living, even for the briefest of moments, requires all of our energy. I want to pass quietly, taking the remnants of Winter, the second skins of Spring, the ghosts of Fall with me. I want to pass gently, as if I was never meant to be here in the first place. An author can dream, can't they?