



RISE

a collection of poems

Tabatha Wood

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*For all those who live with me and love with me,
and have helped me realise exactly who I am.*

Good journey, little words.

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Purpose

There will be times when the world
seems too much for you.
Too loud. Too angry. Too demanding.
You will lose all your words in the chaos,
Rediscover them in all the wrong places.

Those moments may spur you to recede,
to withdraw from the uproar and disruption.
You may seek your peace in solitude,
Eager to recoil from others' expectations,
to feel the lull of a calming ocean.

It is in these dark, uncertain, trying times
that the world will need you most.
For you are the lover, the dreamer, the creator of beautiful things,
Presenting tools of hope to those who seek assurances,
Forged from the strength of your boundless heart.

Here and now, are the dreams you weave unconditionally,
The wonderful and the unexpected.
Not buried deep within the loneliness of sleep,
But on untrodden paths explored with eyes fully open,
Embracing all of life with your soul wide awake.

Butterflies

I lifted my heart to the morning and
Drank the sun from the shadows,
While fragments of dreams still lingered
In my grateful soul.

I reached out, deliberately, and began to climb,
My nervous fingers
Seeking purchase on the ghosts of thought,
Fine wisps of idea that might disperse without a warning.

I climbed inside my curious mind
and my willing body followed,
Eager to wear a warm cloak of comfort,
Welcoming the brazen kiss of creativity.

Thought butterflies, they graze my flesh with
Wings of glass and prick me with their persistence.
They lift and land and leave with them small moments
of great clarity and understanding.

Here now I climb the mountains of myself,
To reach higher up and look farther out.
To see the world and not merely let the world see me.
I lift my heart each day to the morning,
To catch the butterflies before they

fly

a w a y...

Sunflowers

I keep a vase of sunflowers on my windowsill,
Reminders in dark days the sun is always with me still.
Each blossom; sown and nurtured, tended by my hands alone.
Blessed am I, to bring their love and light into my home.

Outside, they follow with adoring gaze,
as their God spins sideways through the days,
And when their reign of sunlit worship passes by,
they bow their heads in silent reverence to the sky.

Their fragile, flagpole stems crutched with a cane,
They brave each bitter onslaught from the wind and rain,
As time ravages, and plucks from them their golden crowns,
They shake the promise of new life into the ground.

As each one stretches ever onwards, reaching tall,
The higher that they climb, the greater danger they will fall.
They're born to strive; reach up, reach out, towards the skies.
Their time is fleeting, but, despite it all, they always rise.

Glass Ghosts

Every time I remember you

It hurts.

Like falling on a bruise.

Most days it is almost too easy

To forget.

Until I press the memory.

The pain smarts as a reminder,

Of things that once were,

And now are lost and gone.

So I sweep up the past and tidy it away.

Only pull it out when I feel ready

To face my feelings.

Yet, I am never really ready.

I could pack up the thought of you

In boxes,

And carry you just the same.

But the memory of you

Is just too heavy.

A Moment In The Long Grass

He runs.

Wild wind caught in his hair and at his heels.

A barefoot charge of leaves and grass,
of mud and musk and stone.

Each step one more, one more
towards his next adventure.

Powered by the grace of his belonging,
his childish freedoms still unclaimed.

Unchained.

Unbound.

Embracing all of life and all his dreams,
paused only, briefly, to observe each moment,
and when he stops,

the whole world beckons him to run again.

There, as I watch him,
he turns and comes to me,
clutching fistfuls of wild flowers,
plucked and held aloft,
with a broad and breathless smile.

The very finest gifts that he can give.

A grand bouquet.

A generous posey.

And there he showed me,
where once my heart saw only weeds,
he offered love.

Terpsichore

As my dearest Nana once used to say,
“It’s blowing a hoolie outside!”
And we’re locked in a merry dance today,
The rhythmical wind and I.

With a whispering, fluttering,
swooping and skittering.
A floating and soaring,
surging and roaring.
We’re coupled in an amorous masquerade,
As I’m thrown and I’m spun by this wild tirade!
We are joined in elation and movement and motion,
In the song of the wild and the free.

Oh! And I twirl with my heart full of joy,

BLOWN APART!

By that powerful, passionate, marvellous wind
Within me.

Your Olive Branch is Barbed by Thorns

Words stick like spinach between her teeth —

Picked out, examined and discarded.

A healthy diet of apologies. An unfamiliar taste.

Like Mother said, I'll eat my greens.

But while these boundaries, expectations,

Taste so strange and bitter in my mouth,

I am determined I will swallow them.

For I have nothing to be sorry for.

I Won't Wait

Was I supposed to wait;
For the planets to align.
For things to get better.
For someone else to make the difficult choices.
For you?

I won't wait.
It's not in my nature to spend my life in limbo
Waiting in a queue or for my turn
To speak.

If you want me,
Run with me.
But run fast —
I'd like you to keep up

Lines

These lines on my face do not worry me,
They are not imperfections which I feel the need to hide.
These lines are the roadmap of my journey,
They are creases in the pages of my story,
They are tiger stripes earned through courage, strength and determination,
They are cracks in the glaze of a shattered mask I no longer choose to wear.
These lines are the outlines of my joy traced by the tiny fingers of my children.
They remember the kiss of the glorious sun and the curse of the biting cold.
They are the echoes of past smiles and angry exchanges.
They are reminders of my persistence, of my privilege to age.
They are reflections of my maternal history, a spiderweb of anchoring threads
Which link me to my mother, and her mother before her,
Beloved and belonging.
We share these features as we share our blood and bond.
These lines are crevices in a gorge of greater understanding,
Valleys of bountiful experience, a rolling riverbed of love.
They are stitches in the tapestry of who I am.
Grooves in the printed record of my memories.
They are deep cuts, healed, scarred and made new, made more strong.

No, these lines on my face do not worry me.
They are not the strokes of sketched mistakes which I could erase
Or change to fit and please.
They are the unfettered movements of a dancing leaf, drawn in the morning dust.
They are the edges of my everything,
Of my life.

Revelation

Where once I rushed from heartache to heartbreak,
From demands on my time, and fools errands where I
Poured the whole of me into the cups of others
With nothing left to satisfy myself,

I did not realise the heaviness
my soul had taken,
While I had grown used to carrying the weight
Of a millstone forged around my neck
Which I was afraid to let go.

Now I have found, through time, through experience,
Through facing and conquering the many challenges life has thrown at me
To catch, and release,
That there is always place for hope.
Hope through change. Hope within love.
That where anger once tried to diminish me,
Forgiveness holds the true strength to heal and resolve.

And I understand now,
After so many tired years in which I have been searching
For myself,
I was already here.

What the Sea Brings

It's just glass.

Except it's not.

It's a piece of broken bottle

bumped and bruised by careless waves

Passed over and forgotten

Left to lie amongst the sand

For many days, ignored

By most of those who walk on by.

It's just glass.

Except it's not.

It's a good luck charm

A memory

of greater times and lovely things

It's a comforter and a soother

It's a feeling I can't describe

I know it's foolish to ascribe such meaning

To a thing so small

Yet what it brings me is

A laugh and smile

An acknowledgement of art and love and friendship.

It's just glass.

Except it's not.

It's what you did

What I remember of you most

Collecting trinkets handed to you by the sea.

Putting them together, making something new
Some tender part of you.
Caught in the ebb and flow of longing.
Sharp edges made much softer by the tide.

It's just glass.
Except it's not.

Wherever you are now
I hope that you are wrapped
In the arms of peace.

Release

Take heart,

These are battles that you do not need to fight,

Conflict that can never reach a satisfying goal.

Brave heart,

Find strength in the moment and the courage to do what's right,

Nurture the love that leads you and feeds your soul.

Dear heart,

Climb out of the howling darkness and carry your own light.

Understand, forgive, and let go.

Let Me Mother

Let me Mother my children my own way.

Let me teach them and guide them, find the talents inside them.
Let me praise them, advise them, never judge nor chastise them.

Let me tell them how often they impress and inspire me,
How I value their thoughts and believe them entirely.

Let them grow without boundaries or fear of rejection.
Let me listen and learn and acknowledge their questions.

Let me show them integrity through my words and my actions,
So they know to treat all with respect and compassion.

Let me speak to their hearts in words they'll remember.
Let me open their minds to their dreams.

Above all, let me Mother my children my own way.
Let me Mother my children with Love.

Boxes

Pack up my life into boxes to be shipped across the sea,
My home reduced to a list of items meaningless to all but me.
My heart is heavy with both dreams and sadness, the guilt and joy, they swing and pivot, my head
so full yet, oh, so empty.

And I float, above myself, observing all I do,
A disconnected soul drifting in the smoke of my desires.
Locked in a place between worlds, before reality can finally be pieced together,
Where a dream becomes solid, a choice becomes real.

Say goodbye to those boxes, sailing onwards across the seas, a few steps behind me,
I'll not suffer to be reunited with my experiences,
all the memories I've made, they're already here with me
inside my head, within my heart.

I have no fear that I'll make new boxes.
Fill them with the ideas of my future, and with the passions of my past.
I'll unpack them with the others, build a tower of myself
So I can climb, climb, and look out beyond at things as yet beyond my reach,
and trust that one day soon all this will be another box of me.

Undecided

I am balanced on the precipice
that overlooks the urge of my desire.
One hand is forever reaching out,
Ready for the leap of faith towards the new,
The other clings on tightly to the road behind me,
Entangled in the safety of the past.
And I sway in the wind of my indecision
Never sure which hand to put my trust in most.

Song of Mourning for the Word

The page is dead,
And all thoughts perished.
Now blackness, bleakness, dominates instead,
Where once were thoughts that dreamed and loved and cherished.
Now Autumn falls and brings along cold darkened days,
Stripped branches reach with bone-thin fingers to the skies.
What once was green is faded into ashen greys,
Now joyous leafy whispers change to doleful cries.
Beneath the darkened clouds and furious showers,
That swell the earth with tempest pools and streams of grime,
Beside the window, watching, I lost hours,
In deep and somber contemplation, oblivious of passing time.
There, at my usual place, I took my leave of mundane life,
And opened up the ledger that contained my daily dreams.
The pale, fresh, virgin canvas, alabaster white,
Awaited pictures coloured not with paint; but thoughts and themes.
There I reached, I pined, I longed, I wrote
Nothing.
Nothing upon the page, nought from my heart and mind and hand but
stifling, crippling, suffocating
Nothing.
That this desire can be so spurned and scorned
And speared with barbs; ridiculed and mocked,
That even desperate yearning cannot break the bonds
Enforced by apathy, those self-imposed restricting locks.
That all the creativity within can be contained
And curbed, and that no tiny conscious spark may flower,
Nor grow into a monstrous fire, with glorious flame,
Consuming all with fevered, blistering power.

What hope now for the writer, here, encaged in jaded stone?
This calloused keep of apathetic blocks, of waning fervour,
Where once one wandered, wondered, dreamed alone
Yet satisfied in solitude, a calm, content observer.
Now smothered by a blanket of my own creation,
And shackled in the bitter binding chains I forged,
I have denied my soul emancipation,
I turned my back upon my craft, my love disgorged.
The page is dead, the thought has died within it.
It suffered with foul melancholy, such dour malaise.
The word is dead, and all emotion with it.
Erased without an epitaph to mark its glorious days.
Now the curtains draw across the running thoughts,
And temper all their freedom.
The word is dead.
The page is written.

Elastic

I'm like a rubber band worn 'round the wrist.

The further I'm stretched out,

I'll snap back harder.

Each pull just strengthens my resolve.

So I persist.

You twist me around like a coiled spring,

Wind me up like a clockwork doll.

You trip me up, and spin me around, and tie me all up in knots.

Then you wonder why I fly about in all directions

When you let me go.

Eulogy

I thought I would miss you.

Not merely one page ripped out,

But an entire chapter,

Plot-line, characters and device,

Torn from the story of my life.

Yet as it turns out,

You are barely even a footnote.

A Period, Not A Pause

Every month I am reminded - I am a Goddess,
A crusader with a crimson cape, unworn.
My misericord, my fire inside, brings strength yet pain,
Each cycle an umbilical to Lady Moon.

My super power: Creation,
Is dashed on porcelain, a scarlet lake of choice.
I own the freedom of my body, to bleed life away,
To shed my skin.

I rejoice. I remember. I renew.

My blessings they release me, yet consume me.
I am of what I am,
What I have been, and what I can become.
I feel all Life within me, in my being and my blood.

Years past I saw my belly swell,
Grow fresh heartbeats of the New.
I am moving on now. I feel complete.
And as my next phase beckons,

I welcome Change.

Up

Don't spend all your time with your head bowed —
At your desk, in despair, in apology or prayer.
Wherever you are in the world — look up.

Glass Ghosts, Unbroken

Everywhere I go now
I carry small pieces of green glass with me,
Worn smooth by the ceaseless sea,
And made pale by the powerful sun.
Broken and discarded yet also a small token of delight.

Each time I find some lying on the beach,
I pick it up. I pocket it.
And always it makes me think of you.

Sometimes I am surprised, shocked that time had passed without me realising,
since I thought about you last.
And I will always wonder,
And ask myself so many questions,
All borne from my guilt or my anger or my grief,
For I always thought that you would win.
Yet perhaps I am looking at all your battles
from all the wrong angles.
And maybe you did.

It still hurts, just like the pain of pressing on a bruise,
A disbelieving cry caught in the throat of frozen time.
Although it aches less most days than it once did,
And I have learned to live with that.

For every time I find those small pieces of green glass,
I cannot help but smile.
For these are messages to remind me of my purpose here,
To know where I fit now in this world,

Still with you yet without you,
As I remember you fondly once again.

Always, the Sound of the Sea

As my thoughts move like the swell of deep waves,
And I feel the constant surge and wane of hope and love,
While my mind ocean lurches, churns, oozes and breaks
Like wild, white horses racing to the sands,
I strive for quiet, a silent heart, a still pause, a breath
Caught in the throat, laid calm.
And always, without doubt and beyond question,
Sings the sound of the peaceful sea.

Through each sigh, and moan, and keening cry,
Each wail and thunderous roar of pain,
Prevails a barricade of salt and rock, of tears and strength.
Edges clipped at the sides, the broken wings of already flightless birds.
Resolved to stand aground, prepared for the inevitable
Erosion of time. For the walls to fall.
But always, without any fear of rejection,
Sings the sound of the steadfast sea.

With each slow and gentle touch,
Every blissful stroke of the shore,
One gentle caress belies the thievery of motion,
That chaos could return at any time, a gross tsunami of destruction,
Upheaval and catastrophe - a scarlet rage of irrationality,
Suppressed yet not quite tamed.
Yet always, with true confidence and expectation,
Sings the song of the fearless sea.

Home

He gave me his word that he would carry me,
down past the level where the stars shine brightest
and the wind sighs softly, 'This is home'.

Onwards

Drifting as far out as I dared,
My toes free from the ocean floor.
I said to the sea, "Would you take me?
I'm too tired to swim any more."
And there arrived a gentle whisper,
A wave nudged me closer to shore.
"It is not time," it told me, softly,
"Keep in mind all that you're swimming for."

Necessities

What do you do when the words won't come?
When you stab at your veins with the point of your pen,
Extracting ideas like blood?

When fragments of smoke-dreams curl and weave,
In bright wisps of ideas that flare and fade,
Like bare flames licking at dry wood.

All those words I cannot find, I cannot reach,
They flit like midnight moths enthralled by open candle fire.
Thin paper puppets crumpled in a nest of broken strings.

And those Thought-Butterflies, they graze my flesh
With wings of glass, and prick me with persistence.
So on, and on, the Wordsmith sings.

If Only

If only you had been a single ounce of decent person,
Someone who spoke with truths and not sharp barbs,
Who did not swell with judgement and disdain,
Nor swim in seas of constant rage, denial and self-pity.
Oh, if only.

If only you had taken time to listen,
Properly. Listen.

Did not shoot back criticisms straight away
when your lofty expectations always failed to meet their mark —
Not least when you had led by poor example.
You spat your disappointment at me time and time once over
as you moved the goalposts yet again.

If only...

If only you had been there when your name was called,
Urgently and repeatedly,
Over and over and over again.

A desperate plea you seemed to find so easy to ignore as
You turned your back and feigned pretences
Showing brand new faces for each audience. Not me.
You false, fake, fictitious you.

If only.

If only you had taken your role and responsibilities seriously,
And stopped for one goddamn minute to think of others 'sides yourself.
Instead of playing martyr and poor victim.
A broken person, cursed with glass shard tongue.

If only

All of the above had been different. Somehow.

We might not have found ourselves in this whole mess.

Bright Eyes

My son smells of woodsmoke, old apples and dirt,
The scents of his outside adventures.
His eyes show excitement, all bright and alert,
His hair holds a perfume of treasures.

Bare feet stained with mud and both knees painted green,
He rolled and he ran and he leapt
Through grass and through water and all places between,
Where the magic of childhood is kept.

His hands scrubbed all clean at the sink before dinner
Bear the memory of sticks used as swords.
Of trees climbed, of shells sought, of beach rocks turned over,
Of his love of all nature's rewards.

Now my son smells of soap suds and fresh line-dried towels,
As I kiss him and lead him to bed.
And I watch as he rests and he dreams through the hours
Of adventures still fresh in his head.

Moderate to Severe

It starts with a click. I'm swallowed by noise.

Always volume, VOLUME ... never clarity.

And through the day, the conversation soup will boil me dry.

A ceaseless, rolling, droning wave, a surging, selfish cry,

like memory demons

Rifling through my secret shoeboxes, and I,

unsettled, use up all my spoons to rest.

Days end. A box beneath my pillow.

I passed the test.

And I embrace the silence as an old friend.

Let Me Mother, Revisited

Let me Mother my children my own way,
Just as you Mother in yours.
We don't need to argue or judge one another,
We're all fighting for the same cause.

We can lift up each other, and others besides,
Give encouragement, praise and support.
Understand and acknowledge the battles we brave,
Show compassion, spread positive thoughts.

The choices we make for our children,
Help them in turn choose their own paths.
And the hands that we hold as we guide them,
Are the hands that we hold in our hearts.

To those who are Mothers, like Mothers before us,
We will rise up and fall like the sea.
We'll lose and we'll win, get back up to begin
Once again, for we are family.

Our children, we Mother, together.
We are strong in the village we share.
Still we Mother our children our own ways,
As others will Mother in theirs.

Wildcat

Who are you when no-one is watching?
Here, and here again, as truth becomes apparent,
Beginning with a time-snatched memory
You move too slow to catch.

Fingers fragile, skin frail and gossamer thin you
Clutch the pen as it limps across blank pages,
Drawing spider lines connecting
every checkpoint in your web of life.

But looking forwards is much harder now than casting back.
While both present as cautious and uncertain dreamers,
Dark dancers fraught with melancholic memory and decay,
Two fine performers in great worlds souls lived and loved in,
now mere shadows draped upon the stage

Walk now not as a goddess, nor as a warrior,
those traits bestowed upon you
by old lovers you were always cursed to lose
Love is alive, despite it all, within you
Greater than the gifts received from others' hands.

And so remember, all those heart snatched whispers that were tossed like barbs
A witches curse slipped foul across their tongues:
When they call you a Wild Woman, as you would not be tamed,
You strode out of the howling darkness and carried your own light.

Mud

There is little peace in the glare of a screen
Or the blare of the noise in the city
Whatever ails you, pains you, twists you around
The answer is always found in dirt

Peace

Out here beyond the end of everything,
Where hopeful land inhales the waves in rolling breaths,
A hundred breakers lean in close to kiss the world's sharp edges,
And leave behind their salted tears with each goodbye.

About the Author

Tabatha Wood lives in Wellington, New Zealand. A former English teacher and school library manager, she is the author of three non-fiction books for education.

Born in Whitby, North Yorkshire, Tabatha has always had a passion for writing tales of the strange and gothic, coupled with a deep love for the land and the sea. She strongly encourages the use of writing and creativity for positive mental health, and manages an online group for women to support them achieve their goals. Tabatha also runs writing groups and workshops which aim to encourage and empower all members.

You can find more of Tabatha's writing at her website tabathawood.com