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The Woman and the Well

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The Woman and the Well

Lauren Luomala

2023

For life's little moments that have opened my eyes to the splendor of the King.

I chose to compose a collection of poems for my Honor's Senior project. I wanted to choose a project that would be a creative outlet, allowing me to pour into my work without feeling like it was another assignment to check off in my planner. I came up with this project after taking an intro to poetry class.

I quickly ran into some challenges after receiving approval for my proposal. My advisor left, so I had to go through the process of finding a new advisor that would fit with my project. After finding an advisor (shoutout Professor Haven), I had to create a new proposal. My advisor encouraged me to take a look at my proposal and develop a project that would not promise more than I was able to handle. I initially planned to write 30 poems paired with artwork. I quickly changed the total number of poems I would write and finalize, but I was still set on painting art for each poem.

I began writing at the beginning of the semester, and planned to write a poem a week. With no hard deadlines, I found it difficult to motivate myself to meet my own deadlines and progress on my project. I became overwhelmed with the idea of painting a picture for each poem, and after my first meeting with my advisor, I decided I was going to forfeit the idea. However, I still incorporated art into my project through ekphrastic poetry.

I met with my advisor three times throughout the semester to talk about my process and receive feedback on my work. These meetings served as deadlines to help me progress. My first meeting with my advisor, I brought as many of the poems I had completed. We discussed each poem individually, talking about their structure, grammar, and tone. With each meeting, my advisor started to have me look at the poems more as a collection. I began to consider how the poems sounded together and began to group them. This is how I developed the "Dear person I left behind" collection. I wrote one and when I read it—with another poem I had written—they sounded like they went together, so I changed the title and had two "Dear person I left behind" poems. However, I felt the collection was incomplete and it prompted me to write a third for the collection.

Towards the end of the project, I began to struggle with title choices. I wanted to choose titles that would help form the overall structure of the entire collection, but I could not come up with the words to do so. I think it was also due to the fact that I was not totally sure of what the structure was. Meeting with my advisor, he gave me an outside perspective on my project. Through our discussions, I was made aware of common themes that kept coming up. These themes unintentionally created a structure of a river. When I started to view my project as a river, I began to draft titles that fit the image. My advisor opened my eyes to the words in my poems that could serve as potential titles for the poems, or the collection as a whole, and that is how I chose "The Beginning of Water," "Girl Trapped," "Dandelions, Eggplants, and Cheetahs," and "Runaways."

The title of the entire collection was inspired by discussion with my advisor during our last meeting. The imagery just made sense to me. The woman and the well can be viewed biblically or as a curiosity. Throughout the collection you will find the woman, and maybe you'll find her connection to the well.

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THE BEGINNING OF WATER

The water is always flowing to somewhere
coming from somewhere and finding
somewhere else to go

under the sun it turns to diamonds
bending the light, redirecting it
reflecting it in curiosity

and wonder never lost, only
looking for the beginning and end of the water

I FOUND MYSELF WALKING

through the brushstrokes I painted—
Over the mountains I climbed
and through the waters I swam

looking for the beginning or the end
of the river, but all I found was the end
of my paintbrush, rinsing
bleeding a sea of color

and as I sat watching the serene movement
I wondered if I was the beginning



LIFE CYCLE OF SAND

He saw me from above

sediment

pushing into crust, mantle, core

evaporating into nothing

becoming dust, sand washed up

dried out

filled again, pushed out

forgotten



THE JAR AT THE WELL

I've left the jar at the well, hoping
to find water somewhere else.

The hope taught me to walk fast, to avoid the draw
of a never ending thirst, and when my steps slowed
I took a seat, allowing the long grass to tickle
my arms as I set my eyes on the rays in the sky.

The light laid to rest and the clouds
began to dance, moving to a song I could not hear.
Water flowed from above and my head found rest
on the soft earth, swaddling me as the water poured
forth washing, watering seeds planted by another.

I let myself sink, molding the ground beneath me

GIRL TRAPPED

I see myself in the bubbles I blow—
a reflection of a child
wanting to know what it's like to grow up

wondering if she can soar with the bubbles
and glide with the clouds

wondering if her friends will be the birds she flies beside
on her way to somewhere else
 or the rollie pollie she scares in her palm
 as she coaxes it to unravel

I see a glimpse of myself in the girl trapped in the soapy film—
a girl full of curiosity, holding on
to an eagerness only a child knows
found in leaf piles and mud pies
a life given to her to mold
turning clay into alabaster.

a girl who dreams with her head
in the clouds she glides beside
calling to the birds to take flight beside her
 but the clouds become far
 and the birds are all gone

THE WINKING LIGHTS

The thoughts of the cycle of life come without a knock
and drift away before I can even catch them.

As the thoughts come and go,
dancing stars march their way through the galaxy;
I told them to wait for me, but my pixie dust
ran out, so I closed my eyes to see

if I could catch a ride on the thoughts
on their way to a land of oblivion.

I squeeze my eyes closed
as tight as they will go, hoping
to see the thoughts, or
a star that has tripped, falling
down,

down,

down

and I try
to catch it before it winks, finding
itself among the mindless thoughts
maintaining the ticks of the minute
until night turns to morning
and my feet are still on the ground

DANDELIONS, EGGPLANTS, AND CHEETAHS

Why do they call them dandelions?
Is it because they look like dandruffy lions
Or is there another reason?

And why do they call them cheetos?
They don't look like a cheetah's toes
And why do they call eggplants, eggplants?

They don't look like eggs, maybe they smell
like eggs? But I couldn't tell you
Because I've never sniffed an eggplant.

If I were to ask you how this world came to be
What would you say?

Would you say a cheetah's toes stepped on
An eggplant trying to pick a dandelion
And now the seeds are flying everywhere to get away

And as they moved they created the earth? No.
That would be absurd, downright ridiculous
And I'm glad you recognize that.

Close your eyes, listen
Do you hear the way your heart beats
How it doesn't stop, there's a rhythm there

And look at the sky, do you see the light
Peeking through the clouds, or maybe there are no clouds
Today, or maybe it's a gray overcast day, but look

Do you see the way the sky is painted?
And do you hear that? Is the wind singing?
Are the birds flying, and dogs barking because they hear it

The whisper of the dandelion taking flight

IT ALL WEIGHS ON MAYBE

What if someone decides to attack me from behind
and we haven't learned those moves yet.
How am I supposed to defend myself?

If I asked my attacker nicely maybe
they'd grab me from the front—specifically a cross grab
so I can motorcycle rev their forearm

to the point of establishing dominance. I don't think they'd take too kindly
to me asking that. I probably wouldn't even be able to speak
because I'd be choking on my words

while trying to remember if I twist or pull
or just run away

or snap back to reality

RUNAWAYS

She looked at me
making eye contact for the first time
and I saw the exploration in her eyes
 searching for words *I imagine*
but she looked away instead
letting her movements makeup for the words
that ran away, so she jumps
 and bounces and twirls
away from me searching for the runaways
getting lost somewhere in the mix
of finding emotions.

 I try to give her the words
hoping they'll stick a little longer
for her to bring out when she needs them
 but I think they twirled away with her
catching a ride on a laugh of a scream
expelled by a word she wishes she did not know

KISS OF THE SON

Let's dance on the streets of heaven
and walk along the stars
who have found the light
to help them glow

among the shadows
they rise, burning holes

in the darkness that can't escape the searing light

of the sun risen, casting light
to the ends of the earth
until all is burning, full of light within

pupils constricting and irises glimmering
aquamarine blue in the iridescent light
that kisses the cheek, ever so gently
and whispers sweet words as it fades
to a soft glow within the heart

warming the embers that have gone out,
igniting a flame within, a yearning for
what has come and gone in a moment
of reflection of a breath
brought in and let out
to find its way to the celestial

TUESDAY NIGHTS

these are the good days we'll want back
the days we spend wearing holes in our shoes
as we wear out stories about the days
to come, when we'll be re-remembering the cushions we wore out
as we sat playing cards until the light faded, and the fire blazes
the bottles clink and we stare
into the embers hoping they would tell us
what comes next, hoping they would say
we could stay in these moments forever, but
they twinkled back at us as the stars twinkled down
winking as if holding on
to a secret we would understand
when we are wearing thin
thinking about the days spent
sitting around burning embers
So let's take a breath

I MET THE CLOSEST PERSON TO MICHAEL JACKSON I'LL EVER MEET

His name was Eddie.

I used past tense but he's not dead, just living in a memory
of us dancing through a soup kitchen
with thriller playing in our minds
awakening the urge to moonwalk
and toe pose. Who am I kidding?

It was all Eddie

he was the one who could do the fancy walk
and elegantly spin his way out of the kitchen,
but not before nailing the toe pose
that always looked so painfully elegant.

His smile would flash like a camera without warning
capturing memories of a kitchen
held in hair nets I would discard
but always remember how they fit on my head
turning me into a joke I would carry with me
only to forget about and have it fall out of my back pocket
with rusty dance moves and names
I didn't think I would remember,
but they spin through the web of my thoughts
taking me through a thrilling dance
of conversations echoing in my heart
until the echo goes silent
because the walls have run out

PIECES

It shattered, I couldn't help it
it fell before I could even think to catch it
shards covering the gold vinyl floor, and I step
to avoid but there's no avoiding
the stinging pricks of the vitreous debris

Piece by piece I collect the pieces
cradling them, promising them
I will hide the cracks the best I can

placing the shards before me
I try to remember them before
they leapt from above
hiding at the meeting points
of walls and floors

I begin to glue, placing pieces
like a puzzle, but they don't fit
how I remember, and I tell
the pieces there's nothing to worry about
but inside I'm scattered

as I stare into the cracks



DEAR PERSON I LEFT BEHIND,

I went to find the land of fairytales we always talked about. I've tried to remember the stories hoping they would lead me to the fairies and dwarves, the dragons and giants, the jewels and magic. I want to find it. I want to see where these wonders live. I want to see the stories I read over and over as a child. Do you think the fairies are just as pretty as in the stories? Maybe the giants aren't as tall as they seem, or maybe they're taller. I hope I find a ruby to bring you, but mostly I want to find the lost child in me. So, I've set off on this journey looking for a place I would run away to as a child.

I'd tell you to write, but I don't know where I am, nor where I am going.
So would you leave a light on?

DEAR PERSON I LEFT BEHIND,

in the bottles and neon lights

I said I'd return soon
but he promised me more

a life without chains
where I can run as far as I want
and walk among the living

He promised me more than the bottles
ever could, a gentleman
waiting for me to say yes
to the wonders of heaven

full of celestial choirs unceasing
in worship, arising like sweet incense
to fill the atmosphere with a warmth

I want to dwell in
until the darkness fades

and I am left

DEAR PERSON I LEFT BEHIND,

I'm writing to you again, I thought I caught a glimpse of you today—in the reflection of speckled water, I can't be sure though. I said goodbye a long time ago, but you still cross my mind. I wonder how you're doing, if you've found the beginning of the end we always looked for. I'm still searching myself. I find myself coming back here, looking into fractured water hoping they'd tell me how to find my way to the end, hoping they'd carry me when my mind refuses to communicate with the rest of my body. Maybe then I'll finally know where the beginning resides.

I wish you the best,

Beloved

