

BIRTH/LIFE/DEATH

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Birth

You are surrounded by darkness.

The light is approaching.

It's a bit disconcerting, this sudden light permeating your secluded repose. Light is something you have never known, only the velvety darkness of your sanctuary. Nevertheless, you seem to be drawn to it; a leaf floating in the muck of a murky stream, pulled irresistibly by the current. You let it take you, helpless

to

the

pull.

You are the roots of an ancient tree, nestled deeply in the warm ground. A gentle hand reaches and digs you from the dirt, exposing you to the cool air. This strange new world overwhelms you, squeezing the air from your lungs in a drawn out cry and yanking your eyes shut against that blinding light.

Nevertheless, onwards you go, pushed suddenly into the fray.

Somewhere distant, your mother cries.

Life

How fleeting is the interval.

The days pass like the frames of a film spool, blurring and fading together in a mess of motion and life.

Milestones overlap and merge,

jumping sporadically

and leaving

no room

for

comprehension.

The first steps of chubby legs morph and stretch in a flurry to the first steps into school, growing faster and faster, kicking up the dirt. You are running now, as though someone has pressed a fast forward button, giggling and gasping for breath as your friend chases you through your overgrown garden. Another minute passes, and the gasps turn sour, bubbling up from the twisting knife lodged in your chest from your first broken heart. Before you know it, your heart has mended and, inevitably, you love again. My God are they beautiful.

Monotony creeps up on you, yet time never slows. The slog of a nine-to-five job pulls the hand of the clock back, before catapulting you back to the start of each day, barely aware of the day that just passed.

Eventually, although it seems a matter of minutes, you have children of your own. So soft. So untouched by the world. Before you have the chance to savour it, they are pulled from you; the same giggling, tumbling mess of distorting and ever-growing limbs. Like sand cascading through the gaps of parting fingers, you scramble to maintain your grasp on them, just barely grazing the hem of the shirt hanging from their retreating backs.

Moments return like the whispered nothings of an old friend, softly brushing past your ear before being

to

lost

the

breeze.

You snatch at the air, desperately trying to wrap the memories back around yourself like the blanket you once treasured as a child.

You glance in horror to the corner, where your love's old armchair sits, empty and still.

Was it not yesterday that you heaved it in there together, brand new?

Where'd all the time go?

Death

And now here you lay, on the brink of oblivion.

Only now does the time seem to slow.

Stiff bed sheets rub coarsely at your fragile skin. The harsh whirring and beeping of machines interrupt the dead silence, yet provide little distraction. Tubes

snake

their

way

up

your

arms,

biting

and

sinking

in.

Blue seems to seep into everything here; the walls, the fluttering curtains, the veins of your hands. Bright white lights sear into your vision, leaving imprints of themselves behind even after you have squinted your eyes shut. You long for the cool darkness of your bedroom late at night, the warm clasp of your love's hand in yours.

You miss the overgrown grass of the garden you would play in as a child. You miss the sunlight warming your head just a bit too much, leaving a faint sunburn your mother would scold you for, then gently kiss better. You miss doing the same for your own children, who are long grown up now.

A blur of faces and name tags pinned to scrubs flitter around, before sinking back into the darkness outside your periphery. They are all so devastatingly alive. Even when your eyes linger on the bags under their eyes and the falter of their tired smiles, they are so terribly lovely. You hope they realise. When did you stop being lovely?

When the end comes, you barely notice. So softly it falls, like the patter of the gentle rain that used to fall on the roof of your kitchen in the early mornings.

So far away now.

One second here, the next gone in the blink of an eye.

You are surrounded by light.

The darkness is approaching.