

Writing Contest Entry  
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Poetry

# Wish I could be stronger

I've been unraveled since I came out of the womb. Pink skin that never seems to heal blanketed me. Words have lashed at me endlessly. I thought broken bones healed stronger or that broken flesh turned into keloids or hypertrophic scars. Or maybe like the leather that stretches on the faces of farmers born into the hot sun. Constant quips, unempathetic glares. I always wondered why I am not durable.

I'm constantly wishing. I wish I turned into stone. I wish my wounds healed into knotted skin. I wish for steady hands, a quiet mind. Quiet like the freeway at 6 am. Have you ever been on a freeway built over stretches of grasslands? You know that feeling when it's early in the morning and the air is different and the sky is embered? Land turns mystic. I wish it didn't go away so quickly. I wish I grew into radio static. Maybe my soul reincarnated into a cow that grazes in the hills. And maybe transient children point at me and say in that road trip voice "A cow!"

Another wish. Truthfully, I'm a murmur. So low you think it's just your wonky eardrum. Soft hums that erode like water on limestone. Subtle breakage, winding streams. Can you hear it?

Every time I talk it feels like a plea. That noise becomes my executioner and I am constantly on trial. Because it hums. *They know. They know what you aren't. They see right through you. Don't you know you've been raw? Don't you know?*

## Haikus from a pisces mercury

1

Stillness brings more grief

It is held by heavy arms

Weathered by spring storms

2

Pisces mercury

I sink prose to the bottom

Drown in my own words

3

Trauma creates wells

And i keep falling head first

Abysmal // endless

## Oh, the new moon

I grew up around sunken homes. My blue house was on stilts, flirting with the swamp water below. I learned how to use language as a weapon pretty quickly. String words into a machete. Cutting down vines that wanted to pull me into seawater. Sharpen my southern drawl. Bleach the stench. We're not poor just temporarily embarrassed millionaires.

. At night I left our wooden castle held together by future wishes. Our forever starter home. Sat under the moonlight and drunk in the land. *My land*. My secret was my truths. That this is my home. My mother hated it. She hated how the humidity lifted her hair. Or how our neighbors are black. Or how the August sun browns my skin black. My mother was the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. She looked like a Malibu barbie and knew it. The attention she received kept her blood warm.

My Daddy was a stiff military man with kind eyes. Kind eyes that dimmed under sweet tea and honey jack. On quiet nights, not unlike the one I write this under, I can smell his Marlboro reds and feel his bottomless grief.

I left the bog a lifetime ago. My family is long buried. Language untied the knot I've been told the swamp puts on people. Landed me far away in Boston. I became spiritually banished from a place I hold in deep regard. One that softened my glare.

# Inheriting spirit

I spent a lot of my youth in a cathedral. I remember the sweet wine, echoes, and curling staircases. The floors were cold, and the ceilings were high. It was also the first place I heard people talk about how gayness is not a sin.

I think the cathedral near my house was built in the 19th century. They ran out of money so they only built half. There's still parts of the cathedral being worked on.

Cathedrals can take hundreds of years to build. Sometimes the work gets passed down through families. I find that lovely.

I imagine a man on a ladder squinting because the colored light filtered through stained glass has made a home on his brow bone.

Stone underneath him placed by the gentle hands of his father.

His labor becomes a birthright. To create. Temper glass- gently, lay stone- gently. This will become the home of a thousand prayers.

At some point, religious institutions had a fascination with reaching God. That's why cathedrals are so tall

So making a cathedral would be the same as making an instrument, wouldn't it?

Carving into granite to echo out the voice of God,

Looking over at a pillar created by a man with the same eyes as you.

And this wouldn't necessarily need to be of a religious order. Sometimes labor is labor.

But I think beautiful things always contain spirit.

Just to be among handprints of family.

Synthesized over generations- maybe written before time. To create a place that brings people to their knees.