

How I know love

His olive skin was tainted
With the colors of the tail of a peacock
Just as vibrant yet lacking in flourish,
Streaked with the deep red of a sliced pomegranate.
Tubes entered and exited every orifice
Furious flames within my heart seared my skin
As I inexplicably despised an inanimate object
With such unparalleled vehemence
As I loathed those tubes.
Incessant beeping marking his barely beating heart
The sound between each tone
Filled with prayers
That the next one wouldn't last.
Staying inches from death
Yearning to narrowly evade its abhorrent grasp.
IVs filled with drugs
Keeping him asleep
Because the pain was too great.
After two days we had to wake him.
Not gently,
Like the kiss of true love.
For that simplicity is found only in fairytales
And life is all but that.
It was jarring
Abrupt.
His eyes drooped
Eyelids swollen with medicine.
Two of five senses activated
The unfortunate meant to feel the immense pain
The greater meant to hear the voices of those he loved.
But onlookers would never have known his misery.
For his grit illuminated what his suffering had darkened.

He felt the warmth of my hand
Trembling
Within his own.
If he was himself
He would have joked
"You're cooking me Nayrd!"
As he did every time I held his hand
With the childhood nickname he had always used for me.
His eyes weighted closed
Unable to see me
But I could see him

This man who I loved so
Who did not deserve any of this.
And just like that
My own heart broke
A dark chasm filling my chest
Reverberating through my body
The dam burst and the plains were flooded.
I collapsed into a pool of my own tears
Reduced to the same two senses as he
Still clutching the hand of my barely conscious father.
And that's when I felt it.
The unbounded love.
We didn't need to be strong because we had him.
Him and all of the love that he felt for each of us.
Our tiny family huddled in that hospital room.
He, who was lying drugged
and in immeasurable pain
Who could not utter a single word
Or even blink his eye
Whose body was covered in bruises
and soon-to-be scars.
He squeezed my hand.
And gestured for me to calm down.
Through his suffering and his terrible injuries.
He took care of me.

Golden Fires

I love that giddy schoolboy smile
Big canine teeth as bookends
And a coarse beard as its frame.
I can hear the little giggles
That bubble from your lips
As you rub your hands together
Or intertwine your fingers in glee.
Those little ears into which I pour my secrets and dreams
Where I know they will be held
And never transferred to your lips
For they are meant for no others.
Those little ears, that,
Along those smooth cheeks my lips love to graze,
Flush with red whenever you get warm.
Those hazel eyes that provide a view
Into the vast beauty of your kind soul
And your wicked intellect.
I'd seen eyes twinkle before
But never the warm golden flames that I see in yours
Lapping against your pupils like waves on the sandy shore.
Fires that can burn with ferocity
or dance to the tune of your happiness.
Fires that lend warmth the dark chocolate seas
Within my own almond eyes
And are donned by the torches of my fate
To illuminate my own path with you.
But sometimes the flames engulf your vision
And you cannot see the wonder of its heat.
It becomes harsh and unmerciful
Tormenting your soul.
It is then that I lend to you the depth of my cool seas
Taming the fires
Water gently flowing over your burns
Attempting to alleviate the searing pain
Until you can see the wonderful being that you are.
But fire and water do not mix.
Those strong hands the once held my own
Would be my demise
Sending me a message of a love that cannot be.
That giddy smile has faded to despair
Clutching at life
Wishing for that ever-elusive joy.
There was no great fight
Where those large canines sunk into my flesh

And the crimson that once flushed your cheeks
Now flowed from my veins.
It was slow.
In assisting you my waters sizzle and burn
And your fire is quenched entirely.
We can coexist
But we can never be near one another.
Loss of your fires makes you dull
Unlike yourself
And the heat to my seas
Sears my heart.
You did not intend to hurt me
Nevertheless my heart is tattooed
with your pain
and that which you caused me.
I love you and you love me.
But we simply cannot be.

A Real Man

I met a man once
Who told me about a woman's place in the home
That it was in the kitchen
Cooking and washing dishes.
It was the man that had to go off
To work and to war.
And I asked if the roles could ever be reversed
If the woman is tired from a long day's work,
Would the man come home to eat his meal
And then wash the dishes for his tired wife?
This man looked at me
And told me that he would be a real man
And let her wait until the morning.

“I don’t see color”

If you don’t see color
You don’t see hot tears erupting from my eyes
Connoting the intense rage filling inside of me
When I,
A young freshman,
Sat in class learning about the Ottoman Empire
And the events leading to the Armenian Genocide
And was unable to control my outburst of pain.
My friends stared,
Confused,
Until they realized what we were learning
And a faint semblance of understanding flashed in their eyes.
A flash that would become a brilliant light of comprehension
When it was my turn to present
The facts of the case.
Turkey is tried for genocide
In the court of knowledge-
My world history classroom.
I presented our evidence
Each horrifying detail
To the jury of my peers
Where Turkey could be held accountable for its actions.
And my people could finally be laid to rest.
Our wounds have faded
But the deep impact the dark history of my race
Leaves scars on our souls.

You don’t see the wrinkled face
Of the sage woman who was my great-aunt
Whose mind remained sharp and wit was keen
Even until her death at 102 years old
100 years after she survived the Armenian Genocide.
Or hear the bellowing laugh
Or feel the big bear hugs
Of my dear grandfather
Who carved exquisite wooden crosses
For the church around which our community was centered.

You don't see the deft hands of my medz mama
My grandmother
As she made massive quantities
Of the food of my people
Perfect because it was made with such love
The way only she could make it.

You don't hear the rapid thumping
Of my heart against my ribcage
And the adrenaline rushing through my blood
As I danced the traditional dance of my people
And called upon the memories
And souls of my ancestors
As they help me to perform their beloved craft.
You don't see the bright smile on my face
When I know I am doing them justice.
Every time we perform
The dance of our people
We ensure that our culture lives on
That Turkey may have tried to exterminate
Us But they could never quash our spirit
And they could never steal our culture.

You don't hear the smooth vibrato
Of my alto voice
As it soars through the air to the ears of our head of church
For whom I sang traditional Armenian folk songs
Songs woven from experiences and stories
Of so many who came long before me.

You don't taste the explosion of sweet simple syrup
Against the flaky crunch of filo dough
And the buttery consistency of the crushed walnuts
And the fusion of tradition, love, and soul
That I put into every tray of Burma that I make.
Rolled with utmost care
Using the Armenian rolling pin-
The Okhla-
That was passed down for generations in my family
As was the custom.

You don't feel my deep ties to my faith
Faith bequeathed to me today
Only because so many of my people
Fought valiantly
And died in the name of God

Unwilling and unable
To refute his existence
As the One True God.
And that every time my brother or I hurt ourselves
When we were young
Our parents would tell us
“Toon katch hye es”
You are a brave Armenian
Conjuring images of Vartan Mamigonian
A valiant warrior who fought tooth and nail
Against the Persian Empire in the Battle of Avarayr
So that our people could keep their faith.
A faith that remains an integral part of our identity today
And for all days.

You don't see that I bleed red blue and orange
The colors of my flag
And that my heritage is my favorite thing about myself
And that all that I do is ultimately for my people
That I may bring honor to my country
And bring us forward into a new age of prosperity.

But you don't see color
So you don't see me.

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Woolf

I smiled as I read her poignant words.
Sentences that lasted pages
Detailing vivid scenes
And unsaid thoughts.
Strange and new analogies
And a new view of the world
Yet to be experienced
By a child like me.
I once looked
through a telescope
But now my vision has begun to widen.
Forms now seen with greater clarity
The foamy curl of a new wave just as it breaks
To rejoin its friends in the vastness of water that is the sea.
Are there reunions of droplets once torn apart
Only to be ripped apart once more,
Repeatedly,
For eternity?
Or is the ocean an entity of its own
The parts becoming the whole
And each wave simply a yawn and a stretch
Of one single being?
How their repetitive crashing becomes a comfortable sound
And impresses a tattoo upon the mind.
I had never known the sound's ability
To cover my brain with ink
Through the repetition of the needle of sound
Moving up and down
Slowing as the sound fades
Until the ink is but a shadow
And is lost to me.
A new noise comes along
To paint with its own hues and patterns.
How fickle the mind is.
How tragic her death.
How impressionable the soul.