

Poems from the Afterlife

Poems by Lily Selthofner (no name listed), and Jessa (Faye) Moverman

tender and raw – delicate to the touch yet, innocent yet immensely powerful. Unifying reincarnations of love and grief, the coalescence of impermanence, scars reimagined

CHAPTER 1: REMEMBERING

CHAPTER 2: DECAY

CHAPTER 3: COSMOGENESIS

Afterlives (2024) is a video series featuring interviews, poetry, music, dance, and nature with over 40 contributors – view and listen to the full series [here](#). Links to video/audio are provided for each poem in this text

Thank you to all the artists and inquisitive minds who have made Afterlives (2024) possible

CHAPTER 1: REMEMBERING

First Breath

I ran from it all &
the tears followed me
I sat with it all,
& sat with it, & sat with it

Unknown

you never know what a day may bring —
sour sorrow, sweet spring
your reservoir, my oasis -
hourglass clogged by sands of time.
Nobody left to trust,
lost myself, the heartbeat rhythm of sorrow.
aloneness and togetherness in time.

Last Breath of the Old World - By Jessa (Faye) Moverman

I am the last to remember.

The sky was blue once,

a blue that stretched wide, endless,

Believe it or not, birds would cut through clouds.

Sore, leap, glide.

The big sun burned golden.

This dull haze that hangs heavy and silent.

Now, it's a ceiling of ash,

cold, thick as our forgotten dream.

I've watched the world unravel,

slow, thread by thread,

until there was nothing left but dust and bone.

Cities crumbled first,

steel bending under the weight of time

and whatever came after.

Nature followed,

strangled by its own roots.

Even the wind has stopped.

You and I and the animals are the only things that move.

In the silence, I walk through memories.
Waves that would rise and crash, there were oceans once.
As if the world itself was breathing.
Now, I hear nothing.

Sometimes I speak aloud,
I speak the names of those I've lost,
those who disappeared into the fires,
the storms,
the quiet.
I wonder if the world remembers them,
or if I am the last to keep their names
from slipping into oblivion.

There is magic here, that will never die.
It's in the way the stars still flicker,
sharp and distant.
It's in the way the earth continues to turn,
even after everything else has stopped caring.
Maybe I am part of that magic now—
the last ember in a fire that's burned too long.

But I am tired.

I feel the weight of centuries
like stones pressed into my skin.

There's no one left to remember the old stories,
to hear the tales of how things used to be.

I carry them alone,
and I am fading.

The tea brews ever so slowly, slower than ever I suppose.

And my fire has started to fade.

I am tired.

Soon, I will lie down in the dust,

But for now,

I am the last breath of the old world,
and I carry its fading song
on my brittle bones.

Small / [Piano Meditation](#)

I woke up from a dream of being small. I slid down tree roots and entered the small world. I was a bird, small in a big flock, our thunderous rush of wings as we took flight from branches. Our sick and hungry winters. Cold, open skies.

When I am at rest, the trees are my conduit, roots and branches the breath of my life. The trees are busy with crowded sidewalks.

How long can I belong somewhere before I'm suffocated? The tree is still and strong, I am small and fleeting, at the whims of nature's hunger for the lost.

CHAPTER 2: DECAY

What is born from decay? The decay of life, the life of decay. Harboring consciousness is complex and painful.

Corpse

Release, agony into the smoke
ashy fiery flames burn the same as ancient wood.
a rising phoenix or a slow decompose
earthy wormey dirt breaks down my baby bones.
an immortal transition away from life's debt
face melting, skin burning, maggots filling.
inhale, exhale, grasping, letting go, stop.
Do I have a choice? Only to fly or to rot.

Rotunda

oh, what mischief may lie in a little box of sound - a coffin, a home of time unmissable - a phone with no one to call. They long for my silence. I long for silence. The lone wolf howls at the moon.

Urgent sounds say nothing to those whose skin does not seep its vibrations.

Rotunda, rotunda, rotunda.

I long for longing, bitter horizon.

Buried - By Jessa (Faye) Moverman

I cling to the bones of this place,
woven into the rot, deep in the splintered wood.

I slither in the walls unseen,

A stain beneath your floors.

I seep through cracks and doors.

The wood beneath me groans and sighs,
cobwebs veil every inch.

The air is damp, thick with a stench
like wet earth, sour and swollen.

Beneath the floorboards, I stretch out,
slow, patient, my limbs seeping into cracks.
My skin is soft, blackened, slick
with mold that blooms in shadows.
I curl around the nails, rust bleeding into the grain,
devouring what holds this place together.

The wallpaper peels in long strips,
its pattern faint, lost in years of dust.
It curls at the edges like something alive,
like it's trying to breathe,
but only gasps.

The house sags, like an old woman's face after death.
The nails, and wood bones giving in to the weight of time.
Ceilings bow, heavy with mildew,
and the windows, once clear, now fog
with a film of decay.

In the walls, there's a crawling,
something scratching, soft and steady,

like the heartbeat of the house itself.

It's alive, in a way,

but nothing here moves except to break apart.

The dampness spreads, creeping through the silence,
soaking into everything,

turning wood to pulp, metal to rot.

And I, here, nestled in the decay,

will wait until there's nothing left but dust.

I'm in the wood, the walls that leak and ooze.

And soon, you'll be like me, all decomposed

Unescapable (present moment)

time will pass whether you want it to or not.

The river flows one direction.

Don't swim against it.

Every thought will be forgotten,

Every creation destroyed.

Detached tears fall in the pain of acceptance, born crying.

Time will pass whether you're there for it or not. You cannot miss it.

we maintain our agency in the immortality of the present.

Shame

how tethered are you to the past -
empty and imagined, time lost
The shame eats
soft blood, tender
bits fall away
My inhale before silence
My weak and complex secrets

Ocean of Despair / [Mentally Drowning](#) - By Jessa (Faye) Moverman

So you want to die?
How about you throw yourself into the ocean during a storm.
Go on.
let the waves lick your feet,
let the cold wrap around you
until you believe it could swallow you whole.
Step in further,
feel the weight of it,
the pull, the undertow whispering
to let go.

Let go.

Let go.

Let go.

Look, the water rising to your chest,
when it presses against your ribs,
something inside you shifts.

The air above you starts to seem distant,
but your body remembers it,
hungers for it,
the way your lungs will crave breath
more than anything.

You think you could let it all slip away?

When the ocean tugs you under,
The burn of the salt, is nothing compared to your tears.

You thrash.

Your arms, your legs,
they fight before you even think to.

You will fight.

You will claw at the water

Animalistic grunts to stay above the water.
Your heart will hammer,
pushing against the darkness,
and your mind,
your mind will scream—
not for silence,
but for air.

The ocean knows.
It has swallowed many,
but it has watched even more
find themselves,
realize they want to live
only when the deep threatens
to pull them under.

You think you want to die?
Let the sea wrap around you.
It will show you how badly
you want to breathe.

To Remember

To go somewhere for the last time, searching for a last moment worth remembering, knowing, nothing left to grasp for — silence echoes between us, now void, and as in the end, as the beginning, the drum of our hearts is the last ashen pulse left to inspire whoever remains around the curve of time, who catches our echoes of remembering in the blind love of death.

God how I wish I could go back and cherish every drop of water rolled across my newborn skin, every handheld in oneness, and every lonely night, the trees outside my window, the waning moon, my first and last protectors, my angels, red wine foolish the love poured from my bleeding heart, and the drops that swirl down, down, splashing my innocence, my purity, every summer and solace in me, salt caked from seas months past, my memories dissipate into the murky waters of dusk, we erode. The tide picks up my corpse and places it again in the trenches, a reminder to my responder, my agency, my lonely void.

That there is music in heaven, and every beautiful, every painful moment in your life is the sunrise birthplace of love, fountain of gods, and the tired graveyard of letting go, a soft pillow for your suffering.

Nobody left to hear, please, remember.

Dead Cat in the Woods

Bare paws panicky
Tremble on cold ground
Night after hungry night.

She is thin as bone,

Stress frozen on her face,
And determination,
And fear.

I cry for the new home she was near,
I wish I had done something to save her.
I wonder if she was looking for her old life, if she had one.
I miss her and I hope her spirit is free of suffering.

In her family still in this woods? Alone with the creatures of the day and night?
I search for answers, scared of what I might find.

CHAPTER 3: COSMOGENESIS OF LOVE

Consciousness incarnates as every person. We incarnate here, together, and affirm each other's existence. The universal experience, participating in sentience, the quantum infinity of pleasure and suffering, the reciprocity of life and death, boundless. On the people we never meet and the lives we never live. The guardians above and the fish we swim beside. The stranger on the street, in dreams, the infinity, the people of the distant past and future, the people on Earth in flesh and Spirit, thought and mind, creatures known and unknown.

Heart

A dream where pleasure is felt
The heart melts in pools of two
A dream inescapable, reality breakable
I'm grateful to be here with you

Amare e Soffrenza

I love you, and I suffer
In my faulty incoherence
In the bliss of forgetting our time is bound and waning,
In the bliss of forgetting the wild sufferings of roads ahead — wanted and unseen.
Until the day when someone, anyone, will walk my way
and hold me forever,
or at least long enough that I feel my love, true and returned tide,
reborn as sediment in depths— love that outlives us.
Until the day when, by natural or forced course, we must part.
Love of all love, bitter horizon, I am so scared for your time.
I love you, and I suffer, and I grasp, Oh I grasp blindly so,
In the bliss of forgetting that we must die every death alone.

Tender Soul Affirmations

I am strong, I am powerful

I am protected

I have a brave heart, clear mind, and trusting soul

I am safe, I am protected

God loves me, My family loves me, Earth loves me, time loves me

Love comes to me, Gratitude comes to me

I have nothing to be afraid of

Peace comes to me

I am forgiving of myself and others

I am deeply grateful for all that is good

I take action

I trust myself to provide security, I trust the universe to provide security

I trust I am guided through the pursuit of love, compassion, and truth

I accept myself as I am - dynamically and holistically

I live every day with peace and ease

Infinite Lives

Futile, the many times I cleanse you from me. I feel what it is to be you.

Who are we but each other?

Will you miss me?

How many of me are in your world? How many of you in mine?

Talk like home, touch like home, leaves falling different ways. Every season of you is perfect.

Who's freedom, whose truth will bloom with mine?

In the tender embrace of love received, in the turbulent ocean of love given. We are pure, we are soft. we are changed forever.

Threads Between Incarnations

life is a dream.

When I walk past the kitchen sink in my childhood home,
the faucet is missing.

Yet, I still reach for the water.

My hands are brittle and dry from constant wash.

I pass time with my hands, beat and pull

Lungs are dry from constant smoke.

You, are my hands, my lungs, my pairs of beating hearts.

You are air to my water.

life is a dream.

You, grandest dream of all.

Only heard echoes of your hope

Only felt etches of love next to mine

in silence, sin, vanity, disconnection

felt you,

I long to remember the last and imagine the next

time we will be together

you are only as lonely as you are disconnected from yourself.

in angry clouds of days gone by

and vengeful, mystere times to come

Jupiter blesses us so, with golden wings and shield.

He says, the best protection comes only from afar.

Where a different perspective awaits.

For now,

We share a planet, an incarnation.

You. are. here. Enough.

And yet. I am annoyed by whirl of water from faucet, my head pounds after a long day of work.

I am tired. We may struggle and drown, we may float.

But please, join me.
I wouldn't do it without you.
I wouldn't have it any other way.

THE END

Thank you for reading, and for your support

AFTERLIVES VIDEO SERIES - CREDITS

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Interviewees: The People of Washington Square Park, Al and Lisa Baker, Leslie Polk, Eric Butler, Lauren Calvin, Josh Selthofner, Elizabeth Lee, Dylan Blue, Katherine Francis, Jessa Faye Moverman, Julia Haynes, Noah Hanson, More

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