



# *Self Taught*

*Meg Johnson*

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*To the little girl I was before and  
the person I am now.  
I honor and thank you.*



# *About The Author*

Meg Johnson (She/They) was born in Grand Rapids Michigan and spent their childhood growing up along the coast of West Michigan. They are currently studying to receive their Bachelors in Fine Arts with an emphasis in Art Education from The School of The Art Institute of Chicago.



“This collection of poems has taken years in the making. They encompass some of the most difficult times of my adolescence and have all been written between the ages of 13-20. They have been scraped together from many places; phone notes, old sketch books, google docs, etc. Personal Transparency is a huge part of my art practice as well as who I am as a person. So, while this collection is heavily personal, I welcome the public to share these moments of vulnerability with me. By releasing these poems, they are no longer a secret. They are no longer only mine to hold.” - Meg



Nights of soul-crushing pain were suddenly halted  
with infantly sleep,

So deep that you no longer had to worry about us, who  
you left behind.

Even though breath had been stolen from my lungs,  
my legs left numb,

I feel within my soul that you could once again sing  
and run.

I sang for you, pursing my lips in the end.  
I did just the same; to fight the tears as I watched earth  
engulf you.

Rain formed ice, and steel sky, as I held my father's  
hand and pretended it was you.

Never will I forget your hands once tender, were now  
stone.

Lilac prospect  
flutters in my mind  
As I compare  
you  
to all that could be beautiful.  
As every sunrise that has ever  
engulfed the Earth.  
You have captivated me  
as art has captured the  
essence of my soul.  
And as I admire who you have become,  
I keep a respectful distance,  
For I have learned that I cause pain.  
And I was never intended for  
one who brings so much  
light.  
But just as moth to flame  
I am attracted to perspective beauty.  
I wait for my lens to shift  
Before self-inflicted wounds



To use you as a measure  
of pain.  
Bellowing to the silhouette of my  
mother's maiden name.

calling you in the dead of night  
before the bleeding of  
dawns face.

The witching hour  
possesses less weight.

Irrevocable in the unknown.

Do my I love you's still reach you?

-I misgiving to the love I wish was you

Chords played as soft as your fingertips on my cheek  
Into the dark, they played.  
While all that I had resented in lust pressed against my  
lips so sweet  
-with envy of the girl who used to know them.

The night ate up the glimmer in your eyes as they  
peered onto me.  
Your pinky picking at my fisted hand,  
My love,  
you wanted to pry me open  
But you had gorged yourself years before and threw  
away the key.

And now I'm left here,  
When you knew damn well I would have gotten down  
on one knee even though we're only 18.

Because I thought there was only hatred between our

If God could hear my gasping cries, only lend me one  
more day,  
to allow me to admire the beauty encrypted on your  
face  
Oh, if you could just hold me, just let me stay...

I could scream to you, remember years ago, the month  
of May  
Lust drifted by swiftly, and then followed blame, spo-  
ken with harsh intent of displace.  
If God could hear my gasping cries, only lend me one  
more day.

It was my very being. This creature. My soul that you  
began to underplay.  
Still, I craved your arms around me, pure endearment,  
tight embrace.  
Oh, if you could just hold me, just let me stay.

I began to tear your name apart with cruel vindictive  
tongue, or that's what you say,  
I tell another story, one where I clawed and fought,  
forced to use mace.

Sometimes I remember how  
He touched me  
And  
He touched me  
And he touched me  
And he touched me and he  
Touched me  
And he  
grabbed  
me.  
And he held me down.  
... that  
You never  
Touched me at all.  
And that's  
What I choose to cry over.

I have never been easy.  
I have never been whole.  
I have not always been kind,  
But I am part of your soul.

I see the gifts you've given me.  
My writing, art, view of life,  
And even though I am evolving  
Thank you for giving me my life.

I haven't always wanted it.  
And I know how it feels to hit the hardest of lows.  
But because you are strong  
I have been rooted  
In a garden that will forever grow.

I look at you and I see home.  
The only heart I know will never leave.  
When I am broken, you are glue.  
And somehow I never  
tell you  
I love you.

I see how the world treats you.  
It's almost never fair.  
How you put everyone above yourself  
And how well you hide it when  
You're scared.  
With smiles, and Jazz, and peace.

Thank you, mommy,  
For making me the feisty woman that I am.  
A woman who refuses to be pushed around.  
Or told how to look.

Or told how to act.  
Or To be part of a crowd.

Never will I be crude or dull.  
Because I have learned  
From the woman I come from  
To live my life  
Relentlessly.

I used to not be able to imagine my life without  
you.  
I hated myself.  
I needed you.

Now I imagine myself in a penthouse.  
A blunt  
set in between my fingers.  
An oil painting  
drying In my kitchen.

My work on a gallery wall.

Fuck you.  
I love me.

I will never get you back.  
I know that now.  
But I'd like to go back to when innocence  
Flooded me like the joy and love I felt in the most  
innocent of heartbeats.  
The faded memory that is tarnished in film grain  
The smiles  
The laughter.  
The life.  
Before I learned.



To be powerful,  
I am labeled bitch,  
To know what I want  
Say what I please  
Dress how I do  
-to make progress  
Then yes,  
I am a bitch

Convince me.  
Bite your tongue when you call me beautiful because  
you know that you only want  
what I  
won't give.  
What I had given so much of until  
he left me.  
What I had pawned away  
for lust that could never direct me to where my heart  
bled to be.

Circled around back in the arms of someone who could  
hold me when the drugs failed,  
and the alcohol slipped through my stomach like the  
words slipping past your teeth.  
In one ear and spiraling out the other.  
I howled as my heart froze solid and tear ducts became  
as barren.

They called it dysthymia, and I called it Life. A constant  
state of nothing that I seem to be running toward. They  
called me broken and filled me with pills and asked if  
I needed stitches like I was a child's favorite stuffed  
animal. Worn so bad from the day to day that its binding  
had come undone.

So I was looked at like an object. Like a cow led to  
slaughter. But I was someone's neglected daughter who  
men growled at with lust while daddy looked at mommy  
and called BITCH.

So don't you assume that I wouldn't think a hand on my  
ass was love.

That “no flash photography” was only for the art in galleries and not for the beautiful creation of my own body.

Convince me that I’m more to you.

I thought that love was  
Between my legs  
Until  
My heart  
Fucking leaped from the height of your  
Ego.  
After the millionth time, you said  
No.  
And you still grabbed me like you owned me.  
And you still continued to show up in  
My head, my bed, my life.  
2:30 am.  
“You up?”  
And you still lied about what you saw in my heart and  
my eyes  
We’re as deep  
As the blue  
Depths  
That I drown in  
Over you.

You breathed different,  
You smelled different,  
You spoke differently,  
Your existence was different.

As much as my heart screamed that you were still  
him.

There were new marks on your body,  
They represented new things.

I picked them out in the dawn of the rising day  
while you slept in the same sheets where our  
hearts met years ago.

Now in the binding of night where I could only  
refer to you as

him.

I loved being broken for so long.  
And when my secrets slipped past your ears like  
my fingers  
down your face  
in the heat of our lips locking  
I could feel myself healing.  
But if I wasn't shattered then you had no reason to  
stay and fill the cracks.

My fragile heart had collected enough of you.

It bloomed.  
It healed.

You smiled and told me your job was done.  
I would be fine without you, so you could wander off  
to revere another,  
and I would be unscathed.

And without you,  
I realized why I craved being broken,  
Because without being a fragment of my own shell  
Our chronicle ended here.

I thought I was happy.

Momma said I'd finally found a good guy. He likes me for my brain, not my body. He loved me for my passion and didn't fear my tormented seas.

He was obsessed with me and I made him happy unlike everyone in my past who I had to fight to please

-Or else they would leave

Leave me for someone better.

Cheat and lie and kiss me goodbye while they try to push their way further inside with their lustful eyes that crave my touch and tongue more than the contents of my heart.

Wrapping their vindictive smiles around the curves of my spine while I arch in pain.

-Or maybe it's delight

I don't even know anymore.

They all pushed me to break and you

-You

Choose to pick up the pieces like I was a porcelain doll you wanted to protect and mend and glue back together with more sweet nothings just like the others.

And there's the friction placed between mind, heart, and soul.

I love you like I loved the others who tore me down  
and hid me like grown men playing with children's  
toys.

Spending their fun money on me to treat themselves  
for a night until I break and they buy a new.

But you're different I'd like to think. To me you're  
the best I've ever had... but I think that I miss the  
ones who broke me.

They say hearts tend to run back to people who feel  
like home,

I hope you earn a slot in this fucked up charity house  
of mine where criminals become family.

-and lovers are never lost



I cry because  
I'm a memory

Every day is too long for me....  
If you could just hold me.

You say I used to taste like sunlight,  
Now I taste like empty bottles.

You say to smile because it's over, I cry because  
I'm a memory

There is no possible way to explain the aching of a heart that has lusted after more than what my own reality has offered up.

With bleeding wrists and wounds still fresh to the touch.

There are no words to explain the weight I bare on my chest;  
filled with unsubdued memories.

I crave to be engulfed in love so passionate that there could be no comparison.

I was always content with myself until the other people  
circling around my subconscious were not.

Opinionated innuendos that rush  
through the cerebellum  
and to the spinal cord in a static rush

so quickly that most who suffer from the Same assault  
do not process the true measure of the blow

Three words from lips who said my name so sweetly.

“I needed more”

August 10, 2018 at 3:55 PM

I am so so sorry  
for throwing all my sorrow on you and thinking you  
alone could repress my sadness.

I want to be light  
and adventure in your life

Now.

I want you to look at me and just see overwhelming  
happiness.

I have so much joy in my life  
and you are very much a part of it.

I overthink a lot.  
I'm a destructive person.  
So when you left I lost my shit.  
I had to fall asleep to the sound of my own  
thoughts  
-and not the sound of you  
and it was horrifying.

Breath burns with lust and lacking forgiveness.  
chaos to the deep blue of the dark night.  
Fading feels fuzzy.  
Vignette getting dizzy.  
If only the soft orange tint of candlelight thrown off  
of bare skin could mask itself as the moonlight we  
had shared.  
Beauty is beauty, yet artificial is torture.  
So I play with the ideas of the past as reality slips.  
A digit on the tip of my lip while I count the  
undefined damp lines trembling past.

Sing a mindless song into the dawn  
-Scream your lover's name.

In ambient rain,  
She feels new pain,  
Her heart too broken  
To restart.

Hypocrisy is a road  
You drift without her.  
Compulsion  
Inevitable  
-My love

My love,

I've never been good  
At  
Sitting  
With  
Pain.

Innuendos licking at my  
My brain like the  
Flicker of light.

Notions that consume  
The physical and  
Engulf the soul.

To vend the heart  
Is to torment the mind.



This city engulfs  
It's patrons.

Strangers to architecture and the buzz of the street  
lights  
Which seep into the hearts of those it caresses.

To feel small

-When you have only ever felt tall.

To become accustomed to the maze and the  
Winding cage of buildings that screams at you  
For more,

And yet,

More is impossible when this place is  
Built to change you.

I find it very funny how  
You left me.

I find it very funny how  
You became my lover.

I find my blind side hysterical.

-But I think I find you the most  
amusing.

You sad little boy  
Masquerading as a man.

His sweet lips scoured my body and slid between my thighs.

I cried when he touched me as numbness began to seep within.

You grew new eyes while my city became paralyzed.  
I prayed for the days I could see you again.

My prayers slipped away, like the memories of your fingertips.

Your sweet lips scoured her body and slid between her thighs.

when she touched you a numbness began to seep within.

White Walls.  
4 White Walls.  
The needles for the draws.

My birthday poetry from the lips of those in monogrammed coats.

“When was the last time you cut?”

White Walls.  
4 White Walls.  
Documenting my possessions with their paws.

They stripped me of my clothes and Jewelry and asked me to confirm my name.

“So you were diagnosed young?”

White Walls.  
4 White Walls.  
The nurse said my heart was beating too fast but I swore I was flying.

The EKG produced the scribbles that I saw in my head.

“Tell me about your thoughts of being better off dead.”

White Walls  
4 White Walls  
The doctors drifted around me as if they were ghosts.

They voiced their opinions and nodded as I choked.

“I’m sorry that happened to you...”

- I know

But that's why you're gawking at me detained by  
4 White Walls.

All the love I've ever known  
Was actually just  
Assault.

A demanding hand on my thigh  
-I froze  
I didn't have the power to stop.

I'd like to say it started when I was 13  
In the basement of my boyfriend's house;

But really it started when I was 4  
In the swimming pool of that 9-year-old's house ;

I'd like to say it stopped  
But it continued until I was 18;

That was the first time I cried when I felt his  
Full weight on top of me;

And when my last love left I woke up in a stranger's  
bed  
Unclothed and showered with kisses down my spine  
While every ounce of pain rushed to my head;

He grabbed my waist and pulled me in while  
Tears streamed down my face and I wished that you  
were him.

Tears streamed down my face and I wished that I was  
dead.

Now,  
When I hear cars roar  
I think of little men who cry  
Your little ego the same size  
as your dick  
When you never had the guts  
to tell me you lied.

It was a pleasure getting to know this phase of you.  
I think I've loved you as much as I could.

-goodbye



Imagine if I would have stayed with you?  
Let you keep me.

How much potential would have been  
Wasted by the weight of your ego.

My attentiveness to make sure you were  
Comfortable  
Was only one alternative  
Downfall  
To the story of  
“we”.

No matter how much I convinced myself that I  
loved you  
-it was never my job to make you a better person

I was pulling teeth and giving you all of the  
prescriptions meant to heal myself.

When you've done all the things you've loved  
today  
And lived for not the other,

When sunlight flutters beyond the blinds  
The moment steep and somber,

I listen to a younger version of myself  
A child confronted with chill to ponder,

I reflect upon this so-called purpose I have been  
given,  
And how much longer I am to suffer.

We microdose death.  
Play god and assume we are  
Immune  
To the torment.  
Basking in innate joy.  
Profound contorted fortune.

I would like to acknowledge that you broke my heart.

I will not thank you.

But it was necessary.

I will not thank you for the way you treated me and how you dismissed my kindness.

I will not thank you for being a temporary flicker of light in my darkness.

I acknowledge that you forced me to grow.

You gave me no choice but to look at you and see all of the attributes I will never settle for again.

I would like to acknowledge how much my attachment to you hurt myself and how trapped I felt.

I would like to acknowledge.

I don't understand why I continue to bleed so  
much for you  
After all this time  
12:12 January 4

It is morbid how hearts break  
So softly.

To the public only a whimper is shed.

It is ghastly how hearts break  
So violently.

To the self who dies within cries.

I physically cannot calm my mind.

The anguish that I feel,  
After being bled dry;  
With absolutely nothing left to give.

Why I wish I was with you,  
Is most likely because  
The holidays have always been  
Endearingly lonely.

And months ago you were the only thing that  
could numb my mind.

But now there's pills, and therapy, and liquor that  
burns like a hug.

Somehow it all seems more temporary than you  
were,  
Creating a stable routine of self-love.

The busy female body.  
Mind afflicted with motion.

My actions have become second nature,  
to survive tomorrow.  
The more I change my appearance,  
The more I fade.  
In hopes he won't remember what I looked  
like  
Yesterday.

The busy female body.  
Narcissistic how they view me as quaint.

I constantly shift and flow.  
While you perceive perception.

immobilized.



To a broken girl,  
You seemed like fun.

I'm sure that's why  
She didn't have the heart to run.

-Dumb and naïve.

I know you consumed her  
Just as you did me.

An ignorant little girl suppressing  
The woman in her aside,  
Just to hope that a  
mere boy  
Would finally compromise.

But when negative combats negative,  
There is no hope for positive.  
Scientifically the equation is not sound.

So when broken meets broken,  
Someone will reside 6 feet down.

A fragment alludes me  
while childhood consumes me  
Mortality my gaze on morality

I sit as it simmers  
A faint little whisper  
That manages to scream at in-deafening magnitudes.

What has controlled me  
And what has consoled me  
Are unfortunately two in the same.

And I, like the others,  
We're so softly smothered.  
How would one even recognize?

March 19, 2021 8:51PM

“Because of your story and seeing you. You are probably a girl that would bite someone’s dick off if they did you wrong too”

I eat breakfast in my underwear.

I used to not eat at all.

I eat breakfast in my underwear,  
Listening to NPR,  
Staring at my stretch marks.

It's like going to war.

I meditate,  
Then gravitate,  
Towards impulsivity.

But I'm eating in my underwear  
And that should be enough for me.

But, I'm Listening to NPR,  
Staring at my stretch marks.  
Staring at my scars.

Staring at my stretch marks.  
Staring at my scars.  
But, I'm Listening to NPR...

But then there's you  
But you are gone.

I eat breakfast in my underwear.

The Human Condition  
We give it a name.  
The pain  
The condition.  
A chronic illness.

Life is but a diagnosis.  
Treatment varies.  
Side effects may include;

Abuse, constructs, protests, anxiety, love,  
friendships, heartache, burnout, laughter, loss,  
guilt, creation, hope, death,

you.

I find it perverse  
To speak in poetry.

Yet mundane to  
Speak plainly.

My view of you coincides with my contempt,  
For little boys who preach like men do  
And refuse to waver in all they believe.

I wrestle with the crumbs of you  
That are still left in my life.

I have had a flood overcome the repression  
that bound me in my youth.

And now the memories shift like fading  
shadows of dusk.

Men don't think they're possessive until they are confronted with the backlash of a wounded animal.

When the pain of someone they hurt is not met with submissive and docile behavior.



I would like to hold space for the person who stood in my skin on August 17-

“Beautiful face, beautiful body”. Proceeded to the end of the conversation.

Oversized men’s pajama pants draped their stretch marks in a ritual of escorting one outside of the house while a door closes behind them.

Shut out into the night with a hug goodbye and a Lingering energetic buzz of a friendship you swore wasn’t toxic.

I would like to hold space for the person who stood in my skin on August 17 at 1 am who craved the infatuation of souls instead of bodies.

Who denied themselves the physical compliment that fell into their lap.