

Biting Thorns Off Roses

Megan E. Hoffman

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For all those lost inside a dark place;

The womb is also dark,

And transformative

||

Introduction

I don't like feeling stuck.

My energy very quickly coagulates, and I get antsy. As if I'm in some sort of indefinable funk, and everything I do only propels me deeper into motionless, useless frustration.

And I think, for the most part, I have felt stuck and directionless for some time. So I came up with whatever I could to distract from that feeling: reinventing myself, doom scrolling, Netflix, drugs, relationships, sex, shopping—there really are endless options.

But I think, at the end of all that, we are still left with ourselves and our dissatisfactions. And those are what we really need to dig into—get brutally honest with ourselves about—if we're ever going to be happy.



And, I think maybe I always knew that, but I was too scared to do it. Lucky for me, I'm not one to shy away from hard work indefinitely.

It took me a long time—and a very rough relationship—to finally come to a place of realizing there was never anywhere to go, except through the sludge. Because I could run forever, and that same sludge would still be there, waiting for me to find my way through it. Tossing itself up and ruining every good thing I managed to hold—until I put on the gloves, got down on my hands and knees, and started scrubbing.

So anyway, here we are; scrubbing.

It's hard to know for certain where to start, or how to direct your journey. I think the biggest learning curve for me was just in showing up as often as *I felt* I could, and allowing the path to turn in whatever direction it was going to turn that day. I'm a huge control freak, you see; so letting go and trusting can feel almost impossible.

And now I'm putting this out into the world, without a single clue of what will happen in the aftermath. Scary.



This book was as much of a journey for me as I hope it may be for you. When I started, I had a billion ideas and plans for what it 'should be'; it turned out to be none of those. But somewhere in the middle, I realized there was a theme I kept returning back to; hope.

And 'hope' is actually the very last word I wrote.

Seems fitting.

What this did turn into is a deep exploration of love; the brutality of it, the pitfalls of attachment, loyalty, and what it all means. It is a young woman wrestling with herself on some of life's biggest open-ended questions; searching for guidance, purpose, and peace.

How do we accept the unacceptable? The unfathomable? Violation of the inviolable?

Maybe hope is the only thing we can lean into, in the face of complete hopelessness;

Maybe hope, is our human superpower.



Part One

“I was searching for a vocabulary with which to make sense of death, to find a way to begin defining myself and inching forward again.”

*(Kalanithi, 148)**

“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”

Carl G. Jung



There is no hope here
That fire has been extinguished;

Just let it go.

Other people were designed to break your heart.

Let it go, let it go

Hope is a stubborn and resilient thing isn't it
It will drag your weak and tired body across the
coals
Again and again and again;

It holds on

Sometimes, I wish I knew how to kill it.

||



My uncle showed up at death's door last year

Cold, tired, and alone
After forty-six winters walking around
Carrying this heavy thing on his back

I may not have much knowledge of the world
yet
But I do know that we need to change;

We don't often hold each other well.

”

I won't spend much time talking about him

In part, because all I knew of him was passed
down from others' mouths;
From a family divided

Except, I did hear his creativity could color an
entire room in warmth;

Then again, you can imagine the things you'd
say about your loved ones

And I'm sure they'd be the same;



We are only soul

“

Pride is easy to accept, in the way that it shines;

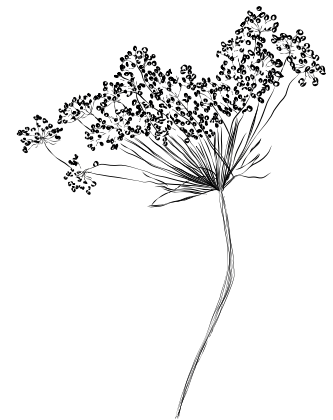
But if I asked you to join me in the dark,
would you set down your own light, so you
could better hear me?

And what if I told you things you didn't like?
What if I said things that made you feel in ways
you'd rather not?

Would you sit still, and could you bear it?

Or would you turn away;
would you reach for the light?

||



If Anger could speak, it would beg to be seen
It would scream and scream until it's throat gave
out—

“Fight for my life!”;

I was a burdened child
And not much about that has changed.

If Grief had a voice
It would sound like a little girl,
Carrying the weight of a life held too close to
her bones;

Of love like coffee stained teeth.

The lives we have lived deserve proper funerals
But the putting to rest;

That, my dear friend, is the beast.

||



Maybe I put my *heart*, into the wrong people;
Certain ones have a knack for extinguishing
hope

But I cannot believe they mean to do it

”

Your world is impossible to untangle
And you have made everyone I love, sad

Not just sad. *Broken-spirited.*

How many tender things have you held in your
hands
And smothered

How does one forgive that?

”

Faces change, but time does not do much for you
My friend

Yours is the cup that remains empty.

I wish, I wish, I knew how to fill it.



||

Part Two

“He who knows not that the Prince of Darkness is the other face of the King of Light, knows not me.”

Manly P. Hall

“That which sings and contemplates in you, is still dwelling within the bounds of that first moment, which scattered the stars into space. Who among you does not feel that his power to love is boundless?”

Kahlil Gibran



You know
I can be pretty damn self-righteous

Sometimes.

...

The kind of self-righteous that angers when
I pour my heart into someone,
And they refuse to listen

And I think I've been afraid to reach out
because, well
I feel I need to be less of those things, first;

I don't want to keep messing this up.

...

I expected all the things a daughter, sister, friend,
or lover
Should be able to expect

But I also forgot that 'should be', isn't always
'what is'

And that 'what is', is usually the thing we most
don't want to accept.



So I refused

And I got rigid;
And I turned cold;
And I hardened;

I boarded up my heart.

”

It is far easier to be angry, and right
Than broken and sad

And I was honestly trying to help
But you know how I get when I believe
I know best

What is the road they say is paved with
good intentions?

...

And I couldn't walk in your shoes
And I wouldn't meet you where you stood

And I see now, that none of this really even
mattered anyway,

Because I could be the most righteous person in
the world

And in this case, I'd still be wrong;

I'd still be wrong.

||

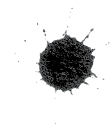


Thank you for this great, and all-consuming
task—
My life

I haven't made peace with it yet;
I don't even make my bed in the morning

But I am trying

My God, I promise; I am trying.



||

Something has died;

I didn't get what I wanted.

I didn't get what I wanted

...and that is sad.

We all carry graves inside of us.

“

Have you considered that we do not grieve out
of anger,
But out of love;

And is that not more beautiful than any amount
of bitterness you could possibly carry?

“

I have held on too tight;
I have been buried with the dead thing,
And I did it by choice

On this, I am still working

Death is an evolution if you rise to the occasion;
Be brave
Rise to it



“

Things have a way of reaching us more deeply,
and with greater poignance,

In their absence.

When meaning comes to slip through the cracks,

Allow it

...

There is so much to learn in your grief;

Build a temple here

Make it home

||

