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Psalm of the Sick and Unclean

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Psalm of the Sick and Unclean

Description

A poem about fighting with a chronic illness.

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About the Contributor

Abby Shaffer is a liberal arts student with a concentration in creative writing. She thinks it's pretty great that God gave us words, and she hopes we will make them as true and beautiful and hopeful as we can.

PSALM OF THE SICK AND UNCLEAN

ABIGAIL SHAFFER

Despair,
let's see what you have on me.
Taking inventory:

1. (As always on these days,) my fingers are live wires.
2. The pain in my bloodstream is warm and carbonated. It is hot like cider; it sparks.
3. My neck is broken glass.
4. My bottom lip is leathery snakeskin, ready to molt, needing moisture.
5. My skin is damp; it is like sodden fruit, bruising on the ground after rain.
6. I smell humid and rotted— my sweat the most fermented I've ever been glazed with.
Acidic.
7. The electric static of knives sharpening is rippling through my brain.

So what?
Damn you, despair! I laugh—oh yes, you are damned forever.
And disease, you ravenous animal gorging on my flesh,
feast away. You can only devour me for the shortest of my two lifetimes.
Even if you continue to bring me to tears every night,

in every moment where you make me feel like some cast-off corpse of stale decay–
some torn-up *thing*–

My election is sure and I elect to tell you that plainly.

Dear disappointment, we both know I am cyclically riddled with spasms of agony,
and you will rip my heart out without fail as I lie chained like Prometheus,
but you cannot eat my soul in the secret place.

Diagnosis, dearth, death–I will not often lift my head like this, rebellious,
neck glistening with victorious effort–

but even when I do not,

even as you consume my life and rip my flesh with your teeth, years mangled–
the dormant citizen of imminent newness in me will remain untouched.

Yes, every time I break down and lose myself again,

my God will not lose me, and neither I nor His angels need rebuke you–

you can control me but never own me,

and the stench of the torture you anoint me with is a pleasant fragrance to my Healer.