

to rest



a book of poetry  
by charlotte friend



welcome :)

i hope you find a comfy place

to rest

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this collection of poems  
is dedicated to  
you taking your time  
to listen to yourself  
to breathe in and out  
to find rest in the messes of life

shadows

nothing hidden

nothing forgotten

nothing broken

only holy

the truth

comes as it goes beyond my understanding

reaching

grasping

and asking

“can you stay just a bit longer?”

i need to hear your power

i need to be healed

shower me in light and love

so that i too may cast the shadows of my beloved



wilderness

unafraid to kiss the beauty in everything  
sinking softly into nonsense  
to remain calm about the chaos  
i see with each step  
everything falling apart

no truth has ever been told  
when our vocabulary lies  
no love has ever been shared  
when false gods arise

functioning

my guts are spilling out of me  
and i've never felt more alive  
no air left to breathe  
and no lungs to inflate

the only things left  
are the ones i haven't picked up yet  
tinker toys on the ground  
and legos waiting to be stepped on

that's all i'm made of  
that's all i have to offer  
--her pain

an offering to play with  
everything is a game  
if you try hard enough

i would be lucky to taste her grief  
to feel something so strongly and deeply  
never apologizing for its being

not to romanticize healing from tragedy  
or anything

once upon a time

i inhale a hit of my childhood  
reminded only of coping  
forgetting the pain  
not thinking straight  
never have  
once

once  
i thought maybe  
once i loved  
and moved likewise

once

original sin

i want to scream the things i discovered a second ago  
but when i immediately release ideas  
it's like they go off to school  
forming their autonomy in the world

i am codependent on my knowledge  
i breathe through every fear that stopped me in my tracks  
she is a do-over  
i treat her like my daughter  
waking up in the middle of the night  
unable to get to me

living vicariously,  
she dreams of compassion  
only of patience  
of peace  
and absence of shame  
so guilt has no feet to stand on

tapping into the unending well of energy  
i weep over having lost  
by becoming a daughter

why do we make up words for heaven and hell  
when this existence can never know  
the name on my birth certificate  
dying in search of the truth  
killing for what they believe  
inherently  
as true

that's what real sinners do

summation

i am not enough  
i will never be a sum  
so i carry on each day

hoping and praying to find a purpose  
i pick one up out of the dust  
lugging it around like a martyr with a cross  
tricked into believing this is the only way to continue  
carrying out my purpose with pain  
and questioning its sanity along the way

lust for life

do i move in purity  
or are my actions clouded by worldly desires?  
is this all part of something greater?  
something meant for me?  
thinking about it gets to be too much  
and i would like to lay in your arms  
finding a place where i'm allowed to belong  
within me  
without looking fear in his eyes  
say to him your wants and needs  
his constant "what if's..." become boring after the third  
ready to burst with more  
wanting  
doing  
needing  
belonging

uniqueness released

strangers speaking things  
i thought only i'd dreamed  
the connection and shared joy  
alongside pain  
communally  
asking nothing  
except acceptance  
a space to heal

the universe whispers to us  
asking only one thing:  
more patience, more trust

they'd have you bald and barefoot  
asking for neither admiration nor pity  
of the collarbones peeking out from robes

adorned with nothing more than your aura  
you entered the space between reality and heaven  
ma'am i'll have to ask you to please keep off the grass

react

is this pain laughing at me or with me  
either way i'm finished with reacting  
shrinking into pocketable bites  
sold as a quest for balance  
smiles received as kisses  
filed as romance  
immediately  
but there's an innocence to it all  
when you let there be  
the only sin:  
wishing to expand further  
than the space you make for others



ugly.

the darkness creeps in  
and i pretend not to know who i am  
as if my joy holds no space for pain  
twisting things i want into weapons i need to survive  
on the brink of inhumanity  
my thoughts scroll past  
i do not attach  
yelling louder  
yakking up  
vile thoughts i watch from screens  
couldn't have fathomed such evils  
if part of me hadn't summoned them quietly  
distracting myself with love  
i turn my back on hate  
and hate sneaks in from behind  
nowhere i could ever know  
nowhere i remember being  
...did i black out back then?  
and awake as someone new  
someone fearful

mistakes/embarrassed

assumptions of sweetness  
when you say less  
listen more

but that's not how i learn  
stumbling over my own shoes  
and words without tripping

but getting close with each  
show of authority  
and autonomy of control

she laughs  
scheduling unseen tasks  
you cannot miss

preconceived fears

i hide my blessings in your womb  
keeping them a secret  
makes them gone too soon

mother wound

i dance with death every day  
our duet began with my mother  
when her mother passed away  
she's my other half  
telling me what to do  
and what not to fear  
for fear of losing me too  
don't look at your feet  
but directly into my eyes  
you'll catch her smiling softly  
calmly  
welcoming you into her arms  
everyone will tell you it's cold there  
passive  
but their memory fails them  
they don't see death  
they only feel her actions  
distracted by the reality she brings  
her ever-present staunchness  
standing, looming and praying for the day  
i hold her hand again while crossing the street  
but i never leave her side  
to bring her comfort  
to tell her it's okay

we all have to look up and return to you one day  
to know death again  
to feel your everything and to be nothing we can speak of yet

mother heal

giving everything i feel  
immediately back to him

he is a dear friend

one i keep close  
one i've known since the womb  
and before  
and after death

and waking my mother to the truth  
i was a spirit inside her  
we moved together

for 10 months  
every. damn. step.

never escaping the other's shadow  
clung  
for life  
claws and all

he plucked each thorn away somehow  
because i couldn't even ask for help

lend me another one of your atoms  
so i might work out this crick in my neck  
and the itch in my pink

time

if i felt this stress tomorrow would it go away today?  
i am detached from the minutes  
, seconds and hours guiding the days  
they do nothing good on my bones  
having no empathy  
they pass me by without a care  
or a second thought

planning ahead

one day i will be happy  
one day i'll have no fear  
all of my exhales have gone to a place  
where i can never be near  
chasing after them as soon as i let them go  
hoping maybe they'll show me something i don't already know  
a place of calm  
where my shoulders relax  
and my jaw can unclench  
detached from stress now passed  
where tomorrow doesn't exist  
i begin to feel the relentless  
nature of the universe  
cursed by bringing truth to this earth

godly efficiency

i gain a year each day  
facing forward  
sights only ahead  
and also above  
with your spirit  
are their eyes in the back of my head?  
or is my memory too good for its own good?  
a calmness washes over  
she's new yet familiar  
i touched her in my younger days  
when i still touched  
when i still played  
when i was soft  
when my heart hadn't been broken yet  
and where my world was small  
and my faith intact  
where danger didn't exist  
i slept in the palm of his hand and liked it  
fearing nothing  
only hate  
evil  
& lies  
is this original sin?  
living in delusion  
wishing no ill  
seeking no falsities  
facing forward  
taking things head on  
i gain a year each day



juice

it feels like i've never had a day off  
but not through the lens of fatigue  
only joy.  
an experiment in expansion  
taking up more space than i can fathom  
dipping one toe in at first  
a little shoulder for show

i let go of control  
for once  
just a touch  
and a half of rum  
for you  
and i watch you drink  
but not being afraid  
not reminding me of a goddamn thing

being freed by no one other than me  
opening and expanding between cheeks  
sitting in awe of you and me  
stop questioning the discovery of goodness  
and just sit in its glory (essence)  
letting it pour over us  
dripping in our stickiness

the big break

one day my future self will smile down on me  
sitting in her office  
our desk--only thing between us  
i sign away my life for the best  
the papers to grant me permission of freedom each day  
till the end of time  
with every breath  
to be blind to scolding  
does this amount to happiness?  
it is a continued process of willing  
of seeking  
and believing  
there is something more  
finding joy in pockets when returning to winter  
if only i could find something more  
ideas  
of nothingness  
fears  
of never making it  
so i wait  
stretching muscles every day  
until i'm strong enough to never break

it's not a phase

this black sheep hasn't any wool  
skinned alive--a witch  
hung up on every inch she's ever had  
now how will she survive?

she hadn't thought that far ahead  
only taking care of another's heart  
she left herself in scars  
between life and death  
where does she go to get replenished?

or does her well run dry forever?  
parched by false vulnerability  
and praying to never feel it again

houston death

can't wait to rot in the bayou  
to bog down into the earth  
forever changing and evolving  
into the next  
what is beyond me

healing

i need sweetness  
give me sweetness only  
pretend that you know me more than i do  
tell me everything you could ever need  
until i'm drowning inside of you

today i am empty  
nothing left to give  
nor space to receive

filled with fear of failing  
evaporating me  
and all of my dreams

it hurts--all of it  
trying to swallow  
nothing more than myself

let me kiss you  
sweet like honey  
dissolving me completely

assuming all the blame  
is on you  
i've made an ass of me

free to resent  
free to hurt  
free to heal after all the feelings  
flow away from me  
downstream of my path  
never to be seen again  
like a drop of rain

fear

catastrophizing daily routines  
until there's nothing left to clean  
in between teeth bleeding gums  
out until i die

if only that'd be the easiest way to go  
forever in and out of the future till now  
never sticking to the flow

slowly moving gross  
to come up through our own hurdles  
burdened back to nothing but shame

scared to love

heal me the way you want to be healed  
the way we both need  
are we afraid of codependency  
or is it to trust  
again  
like before  
you met him

how did i miscalculate?  
where did i go wrong?  
haunting me  
till my eyes turn red  
and my knees go blue  
trapped in the spiral pf  
what am i gonna do?

who knew who would ache for the truth  
forgetting there was ground to walk on  
trapped by smog from another dragon  
why was this my path?  
i'll know in a year or 2  
or i won't  
(but i'll have 2 more years of understanding)

it feels like i'm running out of time  
breathing exercises keep the adrenaline down  
even as i write this now  
yikes--  
she feels too much  
she hurts from the inside out  
i wouldn't be scared for you to read this now

back out there

recognizing the trail at your feet  
no one telling you where to go  
saying it's "just a retreat"  
but can you get into something you don't know  
can you belong to someone you'll never meet  
is it possible to let this burn slow  
diving in only to hit my head again  
my heart is ready  
but my head...

she aches from the old days  
never once forgetting the pain  
stagnant with fear -- she waits  
to be told what to do  
is it in her best interest to sit still  
alone like this  
in the dark  
without a kiss

she's lonely  
but she's not alone

or she's alone but she's not lonely

either way, hoping she's growing out of it  
to a softer place  
to a dream she once dreamt



(now)

i wonder if you've gotten any more tattoos

i don't want to hear the answer

i don't care to know the truth (now)

but i continue to ask myself  
thinking of who i am (now)

you wouldn't recognize her  
and it feels good for once,  
not to be seen

you wouldn't recognize me (now)  
like who i was at your side  
crumbling  
in on myself  
wanting nothing but to make your heart ache less (then)

steve's job

the only thing i can control  
is my fingers scrolling through your past  
and the volume of my clicks  
as they mark the passing of time  
who am i behind all of this  
?

you.

lean in more to the rawness of touch  
with trust  
all kindness follows  
no sweetness unsaid

i'm not longing for you  
just finding comfort knowing you're out there  
hearing your name echo backwards  
so i'm leaning in  
still.  
not asking you to speak  
until i do  
not looking to get to you any time too soon

belonging

rejected in my own skin  
i'd like to exit the way i came in  
with a key  
turn the porch light on for me  
so i don't read in to what you think  
because it's none of my business anyway  
but i can feel it personally  
attacked from the moment i entered the back door  
disrespected  
laughing whenever a planet shifts  
even as a joke  
never with me  
but who am i pitting against  
myself if it isn't just me?

boiling

saving myself  
some steam  
some need  
some lack thereof

i can't believe that all this depends on me  
what a waste  
and a curse  
what a worry in my soul

i pursue nothing and everything at once  
only to despise the parts of me that don't work  
or can't seem to profit  
for better or for worse  
dying slowly underneath the paperwork

saturday

today i take care  
tomorrow i play  
or i would if i hadn't had to work today  
the cycle continues  
marked by 7's  
somewhere between a beginning and an end  
never not continuing  
onward upward forward  
leaving me behind

when i think of time  
i lose control  
she holds me closely and i never let go  
only my soul knows where  
you can't follow  
it's too close  
never ending  
spending too much time regretting  
things i'm not remembering now  
they keep the ticks on the clock  
never knowing when to stop their futile song  
never telling me it's safe to slow down

communion

they're persecuting my love  
with every kiss on my cheek  
simply because there's rules  
i do not know how to follow

fall fast  
and hard  
knowing only what i need to learn

can you not breathe in the connection?  
me, i can see it  
as a physical object

between, to people  
everyone's is as bright as day

palatable  
but only sipping slowly

on the communion

you've bled for all this  
and you'll bleed again

for even more  
connection

past loves

the men who let me go saved me  
wanting me to do the saving  
and i would if i could  
have given each wounded soldier  
a soft place to lay his head  
leaving me only with a dent in my chest  
from his oversizedness  
never not going unchecked

but memory plays me the fool on her strings  
and i begin to think of all the fighting i had to do  
just to be seen  
just to get out from under their sheets  
because i could be every girl they needed  
but i caught each one taking  
and taking for granted the space i hold  
and bad behaviors i condone with forgiveness

boundaries broken never to be fixed  
my truths getting dismissed  
for wishes of compliance



codependent fuckery

i need a place to rest my head  
but i can't ask you yet  
even though i know you'll say yes  
needing company just as badly as me

codependency ain't cute  
we know that  
but what are we workthing through  
respectively  
respectfully  
giving space and taking names

i would travel to the moon for you  
to prove how much you're adored  
but is that what you need?  
or is there something more?  
something deeper than chasing down every tiny joy?

codependency ain't cute  
we've learned  
we've tasted  
and seen  
but what is it that you need from me?

mine

one person can't belong to another  
yet i sign a deed each time your name  
passes through another's lips  
collecting a tax of their mispronunciation

you're not mine  
but there are parts of you i carry in my back pocket  
to the store  
down the street  
on the front line  
protected from all harm  
my softness is warm  
but you haven't even felt it yet  
caught a whiff of it once before it was too hard to forget  
will we ever happen again?

it's too deep to swim  
keep your head up and don't sink  
baby be sure to thank the bus driver  
when you get home  
do you think of me  
praying sweetly for everything i need

catfish (false vulnerability)

i've never broken a bone  
but i just disconnected from my fingertips  
losing the love once found there

eyes glued at all times  
even after blocking spies  
humanize me immortally

behind a fake parade of shame  
i linger, still -- forgetting the names  
of men resenting me

stepping on my own toes  
forever forgetting  
i'm wherever i've been

never forgetting  
the seasons  
i've changed in

now and again  
my throat will close  
with utter distrust of its underside

i hide behind everything  
and nothing at once  
like the false vulnerability i dare to keep near me

screens

inside my phone i am ugly  
i feel nothing under the screen  
what do you run toward when you run away from breathing?  
it's easier the heavier it gets  
to sink into the drowning  
to believe that you're nothing  
to need to do something  
to keep yourself from scratching  
at your veins until the day you cease to be  
becoming the nothing you ran from  
do you believe

generational

how many generations store the pain in their knees  
under their chest  
secured by a tie  
one is too many  
the deepest knots slips closed  
spanning in all directions  
eating my entire being

not always tied  
but at least allowed for me to look at my feet  
without them screaming at me  
awakening the lower back  
and always with the hormones  
mrs. thyroid  
like a jane doe

as many doctors as stars in the universe  
it felt like cheating  
not given the vocabulary  
to grasp the concepts of god and love  
perfectly distilled  
i knew them closely  
studied for decades  
before my mother tasted tin in her coffee  
a new name  
although borrowed  
from the stars

the unknown

unanswered questions  
haunting me at every pass  
but how would i spend my time  
if i stopped searching

growing up

i sat in the tub until it drained me of my sanity  
closely camping near everything i was told i'd need  
but where i'm going i just don't see it fitting

empty spaces left unfilled in my brain  
with nowhere to escape  
but asking you to come with me  
ever so dearly  
would you  
hold my hand the whole way

buried

the earth and the ages set fire to my heels with each inhale  
weathering away a little each day  
i work hard to maintain but erosion plays no games  
she has no rules  
takes no prisoners  
yet i'm held captive in her unceasing power

linked only to time  
hanging on by a hinge  
and still i feel my ankles break  
lasting seconds longer than my brain  
so who's racing whom  
and in first place is the one  
that has the hardest time navigating their days  
rotting fast  
i'd hoped to get at least one more step

but there's a split down my back  
i am in two  
inhabiting more ground than one



(inspired) by hafiz

no one ever knows where i'm coming from  
just maybe, that's where no one's been  
or at least their path looks different  
with a destination all the same  
tapping into the oneness of all life  
we find The Friend  
sweet  
and soft  
having treaded lightly alongside  
the whole time  
a long distance relationship  
shortened with each new version of the bible  
exhaling new writings  
from men  
to control words and rules  
language that shapes  
weaving in and out of what you think is salvation  
(and jimmy approved)

it was burning  
but it was not catching fire

return to me, the desert  
will whisper  
i've never been  
although i remember it clearly  
beyond a memory  
a cosmic dance  
the deep breath of oneness

not understood or seen  
just being  
will i remember my way  
the path i've seen all along

trust

i have never trusted what i've felt  
dramatic ass princess  
a brat with privileged glasses  
you're not wrong  
fairness only has games to play

now i second guess everything i do or say  
reaching for self-awareness  
feeling things that have been repeatedly beaten  
up with shame  
crying alone on the bathroom floor  
turning 16 years old  
i can see photos taken of me just an hour before

our contemplation of eternal never ends  
what will cross your path in the death dimension?  
how do you breathe when your angels listen?  
is it opposite of knowing (?) to move without fear  
seeing love as the only instinct

boundaries

i hold his happiness in my hand  
knowing at any moment i could crush it  
maybe i'll do it just because i can  
then again that's not what i want from him  
and hardly who i am

not a single range  
i shoot straight from the heart  
with inaccurate consistency  
projecting my feelings onto the whole  
assuming i'm taking a pulse  
when my hand is only on it's own wrist

echoes never ending between now and then  
reminding me to answer calls again  
i am so soft  
why would you not want to hold this

dad

i burry you every evening  
and in the mornings you arise  
dusting off my old fears  
and remembering i don't have to let go  
just yet

resting peacefully between  
holding too tight  
and letting go

pray

if i cease praying  
the world stops turning  
god abandons us  
our fears materialize from within  
the most rotten ways america could end occur  
every horror sci-fi dystopian novelist got it right

but only by a thread  
woven  
not a centimeter thick  
directly from my thoughts into "our father"  
if i cease praying  
the world stops turning  
and god abandons us

is it fear of ceasing to exist  
or the fears themselves that keep me going  
--praying  
petrified on either side so i can only look up  
out of my computer  
my books  
my phone  
my notes

my lovers  
my friends  
my family's history  
another dove screeching for mercy  
before the last bit of humanity unravels

i fear everything  
prayer is the thin thread  
not a centimeter wide  
that keeps me safe  
from walking outside  
eating the wrong thing  
breathing the wrong air  
letting the wrong one in  
taking the wrong turn  
sharing the wrong parts of myself  
to men who make me question my god  
i don't blame them  
they released dark parts in me  
now freely they roam haunting  
everything i'm trying to be  
you don't have to believe me  
but she's there at night  
and there when i awake  
praying



lost

i am so lost  
floating into a place neither up nor down  
no in front. no behind.  
nowhere to turn around  
suspended in this timeline for a lifetime sentence of misery

or am i just resisting the sweetness of the trees  
and of everyone around me