

Where the Light Pours in



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acknowledgements

Before I begin, I would like to thank a few people:

Thank you to all my teachers who have given me the support and tools necessary to create this portfolio.

Thank you to my family, friends and all the relationships that have shaped me into the person I am today.

When I sat down to begin to work on this portfolio, I really struggled on how to go about it. I felt that it would be the most interesting and engaging if I went through all of the defining relationships that I have been apart of during my last twenty-two years of life.

But, when it came down to actually writing poems about these relationships, I quickly realized how much pain some of these relationships had caused. Suddenly, I was not just working on a poetry portfolio but engaging in deep emotional healing, which, as you can imagine, was not an easy process.

As I worked my way through some traumatic events and difficult times, two things happened. First, I encountered a lot of writer's block. I knew what I needed to say but had trouble actually getting the words onto the paper. I felt like I was painting a picture that some people in my life were bad people and I was worried that readers would judge these people or someone's feelings would be hurt.

But, once I affirmed that this collection needed to be written, not just for an assignment but because I needed to release and heal, I was able to sit down and really get to work.

So, that brings me to explain that second thing that happened as I wrote this collection. Once I was finally able to extract the words waiting deep in my core, I began to soften, to evolve.

It has been truly transformative to complete this collection. Painful, yes, but extremely beautiful and life-changing.

I am incredibly grateful to share my journey with you, I hope it shows you what truly magical things can come out of pushing through the darkness.

table of contents

acknowledgements.....	2
journey.....	4
beginning	
mother.....	6
father.....	8
tails.....	9
red sox.....	10
sister.....	11
dear krissy (2003).....	12
eruption	
ache.....	14
foreign invader.....	16
seasons.....	17
darkness.....	18
light.....	20
transformation	
a memory left in the dominican.....	23
dear krissy (2018).....	24
final goodbye.....	25
emdr therapy.....	28
flow.....	29
refraction	
a letter to my body.....	31
half a century.....	32
generations.....	33
where the lights pours in.....	35

“journey”

beginning

carbon graphite
dark
difficult to grasp
high melting point
not able to be dissolved

eruption

intense pressure hits
carbon is overtaken
by extreme heat

transformation

a violent eruption occurs
far below the surface
deep within the core

transformation begins

carbon is unable
to withstand
such tumultuous conditions

so it is forced to become new

and finally
takes the shape
of a diamond

refraction

containing various sides
some sharp edges

the light finally hits
and some of the light is
scattered
fractured
broken
the light comes in
but only some of it
shines through
you just have to know where to look

beginning

carbon graphite
dark
difficult to grasp
high melting point
not able to be dissolved

This part of the portfolio is meant to mirror the existence of carbon at the beginning, before it undergoes the process of becoming a diamond.

This section contains poems that are representative of my early childhood, from birth up to adolescence.

Each poem included in this section is a way to explore my perception of my life and my surroundings during my childhood.

“mother”

i.

my heartbeat
echoes within you

with each passing day
i grow more into who i am meant to be

until finally
my soul makes its entrance into the world

separated at times
but still my home

you roam the earth
living to give me life

i cry each time
i lose sight of you

you teach me
to exist all on my own

instilling strength in my legs
but grounding through my feet

you live
i watch

you suffer
i ache

you celebrate
i rejoice

started as 1
exist as 2

your heartbeat
echoes within me

ii.

you console me
when i am unreasonably punished

assure me
that there is nothing wrong with me
put yourself
in the line of fire
to ensure that i know
i am loved

you carry your tired
worn out body
into my twin bed
after an excruciatingly long day at work
as even just a few moments
in your arms
is enough for me

you put everything you have left
into your job
even when i protest
scream
cry when you leave
to make sure i grow up
knowing that women
mothers
are capable of
having it all
reaching great heights

you laid the stepping stones
so i could walk farther
step higher

all you are
you gave to me

all i am
is because of you

“father”

i live
consistently at war
with my thoughts
about you.

you gave me
everything
you never had

you did
the best
you could

you showed me love
in the only way
you knew how

you taught me
to be strong
reliable

you pushed me
to be the best
i could be

the best parts of you
are deep within
me

i love you
forever.

i hope you find peace.

you made me believe
i was hard
to love

your inability to control
your mental illness
was projected on to me

you failed to give me
what you couldn't
give yourself

you held me to
unreasonable standards
that were impossible to reach

you make me feel guilty
for resenting
parts of my childhood

“tails”

a coin toss
heads
tails

never sure
what side of you
will greet us

heads

explosive anger
misplaced pain
inexplicable sorrow

tails

overwhelming joy
contagious laughter
indomitable support

sometimes you have to deal with the storm in order to experience the sun right?

but it's not that easy
for this storm brings immeasurable rain
rain that overwhelms our lungs
making it nearly impossible to breath
lightning strikes that shatter our bones

leaving irremediable wounds
scars that manifest as lifelong terrors
scars that scream *you're not good enough*

but then the coin lands on tails
and the sun comes out
drying up all the puddles

what now?
we don't forget
we smile
we forgive

we wait
wait for the coin to land on heads once more
living in fear of the storm

“red sox”

i am rushed off to bed. far quicker than usual. with more haste. more purpose.

i may have been tiny. but i understood. something abnormal. was occurring.

i lay my head down on the pillow. weary of an odd energy. lingering after goodnight kisses.

my tired eyes. forced open. one ear pressed into the pillow. the other carefully listening.

muffled laughter. muted but slightly audible movement. hushed conversation.

i race down the stairs. taking them two at a time. running directly into. my concerned mother.

just in time. to watch my sister. slip out of her pajamas. to reveal a whole other outfit beneath.

i watch the back of her red sox jersey. slip out the backdoor. resentment. floods. my veins.

my father follows closely behind her. lovingly slipping a baseball cap. on her head.

my mother consoles my cries. assuring me they wanted to bring me. and i could go next time.

my mind races. i experience great pain. emanating from my core. causing me to wheeze.

why wasn't I good enough to be included?

why didn't my father love me as much as he loved my sister?

why don't they want me to be apart of their little friend group?

why is my sister so much better than me?

what's wrong with me?

the memory has faded. but the sting has imprinted itself. on my being.

“sister”

we've spent our whole lives
fighting for the attention
of our parents

but we're consistently told
that we should be each other's
greatest companion

we are rooted
in the same soil

raised under the same sun
entangled throughout our growth

varying in texture
sharing the same strong base

reaching different heights
but still, progressing steadily

blooming in different seasons
shedding leaves to allow for the new

every year looks different
for both of us

but our roots remain entangled
clutching to each other for support

at war with one another
at times

but always
on the same side

for we have endured
the same storms

survived the harsh winters
and continue to grow
together

“dear krissy”

2003

i kneel down
look into her confused
sad
hopeless
brown eyes

she's hesitant
to make eye contact
restless in my grasp

as i stare into her soul
i relive her trauma
a heavy weight
sits on my chest
a tense ball
angrily rests
in the back of my throat

i pull her into my arms
feeling her heartbeat against mine
resisting my love
in fear that
it would soon disappear

i whisper:

you are always enough
you were not born defective
there is nothing inherently wrong with you
you deserve better than the way you're being treated
you are being held to unreasonable expectations
you are doing the best you can
you are so loved:
even when he makes you feel like you aren't

once my words
permeate into her core
i feel her soften
release
heal

eruption

intense pressure hits
carbon is overtaken
by extreme heat

a violent eruption occurs
far below the surface
deep within the core

This part of the portfolio mirrors the part of the process where carbon falls under immense pressure and heat.

This section contains poems that reveal the immense heat and pressure I felt during different times in my young adult life.

The poems included in this section explore different traumatic events and circumstances that caused me to hit rock bottom.

“ache”
A.S.

friends for 3 years
until one summer
changed everything

was it worth it?

i hang on to
a glance
a smile
a word

enamored by your spirit
each day drawn in closer

am i romanticizing this?

your demeanor
mirrors my adoration

we both await
our inevitable collide

i feel light
in your presence

each touch

just typing this
my fingers dance
across the keys
tingling at the thought
of your touch

ignites a fire beneath my skin

i know you felt it too

my head against your chest
i hear your heart pounding

the collide

replaying that day
evokes a lightness in my chest
as if i'm back in your arms

unleashes explosive passion

**unfettered vulnerability
unrestrained emotion**

**it's almost as if
it was too much**

for you

**when summer said goodbye
so did you**

**"see you soon"
"promise?"
"i promise."**

**the lingering warmth
of summer
extracted
with the upheaval of fall**

**the feelings
the connection
fade faster than the bronze
on my sun kissed skin**

**& just like that
we're strangers again**

*did i scare you away?
did you scare you away?*

*did you intentionally lie
or did you really want
to keep this going?*

*just the sound of your name
incites fiery anger
in my veins*

*but the memory of that summer
still gives me butterflies*

*once again
i have scared off
another boy*

“foreign invader”

my mother is sick.

there is a foreign invader
wreaking havoc
within the temple

taking out the infrastructure
of surrounding temples
existing outside of the body
tied to the heart
of loved ones

she stands tall
even as the walls within her
are crumbling

she remains whole
even as a part of her being
is targeted and eradicated

she is brave
even as she refuses to allow
this foreign invader to overtake her spirit

her temple is sacred
and for that reason
her soul reigns on

“seasons”

M.P.

summer

your eyes catch mine
and i finally feel seen
i hang onto every last word
searching for signals of love
in between each breath
my adoration rolls in with the waves
anchored to a kiss, a promise

fall

the excitement of new beginnings floats lazily
i melt in awe at the presence of colors i never knew existed
within this lingering warmth, a brisk chill creeps in
until finally, darkness overtakes the light
i lay with the leaves, tossed aside and decaying

winter

the sound of your name causes my body to tremble
i wake each morning, resenting your existence
i scrub my skin of your touch
only to allow you re-enter
to fill to spaces of fear and inadequacy
you took away the light
so i mistakenly thought you could bring it back
but you only brought more darkness

spring

i plant seeds of hope
to cover up self-loathing and regret
and to my surprise
something beautiful grows in its place
i water and tend to these seeds
the heavy darkness has seemingly melted away
yet i still ache for warmth

i have yearned for the return of summer
spent countless night cursing into a tear-stained pillow
but it has finally arrived
and i still feel cold inside

“darkness”
M.P.

how many times
do i have to push your hands off me
for you to understand
i don't want you
to touch me

“well you didn't push my hand away that hard”

my body is not
your fucking
playground

you cannot
just simply
come and go
as you please

“you know you want me to”

do i?
why haven't i just gotten up and left yet?
who am i more mad at?
him for taking advantage of me?
or me for letting him?

in the moment
i remember my brain
screaming at me to run
but my legs refused to move

for so long
i had begged for him to want me
i had craved his attention

so when i finally got it
the version of me that still loved him
the one that lives in the darkness
refused to leave

every fiber in my being
shriveled at his touch
crying for me to get up

“please stop touching me”

i begged
hoping he would stop
so i didn't have to walk away
from what i had yearned for
for so long

or maybe
i thought that if i stayed
he wouldn't be such a monster
because it would be consensual

.
. .
. .
. .
. .
. .
. .
. .
. .
. .
. .

but it wasn't.

“light”
M.P.

my voice became powerless
but i had come too far
to go this far back

i had fought
demons
walked through
fire

i refused to lose
anymore pieces
of myself

so i decided
it was time
to finally listen
to her

the version of me
the lives in the light

it took all the strength
i had left
to get up
and walk away

with dignity
with grace

it was when i made it into my house
that it set in

my breath became
heavy and labored
my entire body
began to shake

i scrubbed my skin
clean of his undesired touch

i stared at my reflection
cursing at the blemish
that was stained
across my neck

empty eyes
stared back at me

my trembling hand
raced up to my mouth
to muffle the whimper
escaping from my soul

i apologized

to the girl
that lives
in the light

wiped her tears
and promised
to never again

return to the darkness

transformation

transformation begins

carbon is unable
to withstand
such tumultuous conditions

so it is forced to become new

and finally
takes the shape
of a diamond

containing various sides
some sharp edges

This part of the portfolio is meant to mirror the part of the process where carbon transforms into a diamond after facing extreme pressure and heat.

This section contains poems that explore my process of rebirth as I detail various relationships and events that shaped me into the person I am today.

Each poem included in this section is a way to explore how I used pain and situations from the past to heal and evolve.

“a memory left in the dominican”
K.H.

you taught me
intimacy, belonging, connection

you revealed what wonders
could take the place
of a late-night drunk text
or a half-ass apology

we tangoed in the moonlight
covered in sand and salty kisses

all i ever knew
was empty promises
degrading dialogue
and emotional torment

but within 72 hours
you brought the sun

you came into my life
rather quickly
and in a matter of days
left with a brisk goodbye

while i mourned your absence
i knew you were never meant to stay

you came to show me
what could be
if only i let go
of what i thought i wanted

“dear krissy”

2018

stop
romanticizing
weak-minded
insecure
boys.

they cannot give you
what you think
you need.

nobody
can give you
what they
do not have.

everything
you seek
yearn for
beg for
pray for
is within
you.

the extraction
will be painful
devastating
seemingly
impossible.

but it will also be
life-sustaining
earth-shattering
unfailingly
beautiful.

you can do it.
you will do it.
you will get there.
all on your own.

“final goodbye”
M.P.

i've prayed
begged
for your removal from my life

and finally
that day is here

one final goodbye

you have controlled
my every
thought
emotion
decision
for the majority of my college life

finally
you're leaving

i can't help but feel nostalgic
for all i've been through

you broke me

i thought i would never
find my old self
ever again

and i didn't
she's gone
and has been replaced
by someone
so much better
so much stronger

i think back
to who i used to be
and i barely recognize her

2017

she cries herself to sleep
every night

biting down on her pillow
to avoid waking up her roommate

to conceal the harsh whimpers
that escape from her soul

each morning
she stares at herself in the mirror
disdainfully

cursing every feature
every unique characteristic

as it had not been enough
to make him stay

she trembles
every time he enters the room

as if her body knows
his presence extorts
every ounce of life she has left

each decision she makes
is formulated with him in mind

she exists
as an empty shell
of a girl
who sacrificed herself
to save him.

2019

today
i look you in the eyes
and say goodbye

goodbyes should be sad, right?

this one overflows
with freedom

there you are
standing right in front of me
begging
for one more night

arguing
that it would only make sense
to finish off
what we started

as i stare back
into your pleading eyes
your damaged soul
you ask me "well why wouldn't you?"
and the answer has never been so clear

i hear a voice
emanating from my core
yelling
confidently
growing
as i give it more attention

because i don't want to.

because i want more than what you can give me.

because i deserve better.

because i love and respect myself too much to go back to what broke me.

because i've journeyed deep into the dark parts of your soul

and even deeper into the dark parts of mine

and realized

I belong in the light.

“emdr therapy”

my life plays out like a movie in my head as i fast forward clips dancing around my mind. i see
familiar faces and events from the beginning of time

pause.

a memory that was incorrectly processed begins to play out with pain-staking detail, causing
me to quiver. i feel all of the sadness, frustration and anxiety all over again

*why am i not good enough? what did i do wrong? why don't you want to be with me? why
don't you believe in me? what's wrong with me? why don't you love me?*

i try and describe what it is that i am seeing in my head. my voice cracks as my present self
cries for my 6-year-old self. i feel a tightness in my chest. a heavy weight deep in my stomach.
a suppressed scream in the back of my throat. i sit with these feelings for a bit, letting them
speak to me

fast-forward.

repeat.

i sit with this pain. until it goes away.

i retrain my brain to understand what is true. what is real.

I was always enough.

I was always loved.

fast-forward.

pause. feel. release.

I was always enough.

I was always loved.

fast-forward.

pause. feel. release.

eventually. i reprocess. every single traumatic memory. from the beginning of time. to now.

i release. i learn. i heal.

as i no longer

want to ache all the time.

“flow”

i sit next to the rushing current
observing as the stagnant water
is propelled forward
leaves, sticks, rocks, carried on
mindlessly adhering to the indomitable flow
there are some dips and turns
but alas, all moves forwards

i sit with the shedding leaves
giving each of them a name
some take on monstrous qualities

anger
resentment
jealousy
longing
worry
comparison

others representative of a specific existence

him
that summer
my childhood fears
my lack of self love
old systems of belief

i throw each one into the stream
watching as the current hurdles each down the river
some fly away with no hesitation
others take a few cycles
but in the end
each one flows
out of my existence

as i watch each leaf
become engulfed by the current
i feel a lightness in my chest
warmth within my throat

joy takes the form of tears
brimming my thankful eyes

i sit with the current
one with the continuous flow

refraction

the light finally hits
and some of the light is
scattered
fractured
broken
the light comes in
but only some of it
shines through
you just have to know where to look

This part of the portfolio is meant to mirror the process of refraction, referring to what happens when light hits a diamond.

This section contains poems that reveal my new way of life following my transformation, including poems about what I've learned, how I've transformed and how my experiences have influenced how I choose to live my life now.

Each poem included in this section illustrates what my life and my relationship with myself looks like now that I have chosen to look where the light pours in.

“a letter to my body”

To my body,

Some days I hate you.

I resent

the extra skin plaguing my sides
the mountain range overwhelming my chin
the vast flat space, stretching on for miles across my chest

I apologize for these days

i forget hard you work
i fail to recognize your unfailing support
i catch myself, and remember, you are my friend

You are laced with soft, olive skin

painted with freckles and beauty marks
with stretch marks etched into your curves

A home to my soul

for you, I am eternally grateful

You are defined by characteristics passed down from loved ones

luscious hair from my mother
defined facial structure from my father
warm, chocolate eyes from mother's parents
unique beauty marks from father's parents

Each marking, a gift from my ancestors and predecessors

a reminder that I have been loved and supported for centuries

Thank you

i promise i will take better care of you.

“half a century”

to my father:

i know you will never see this but i also know it still needs to be said.
you will never read this collection, as i would never want my healing to bring any harm to you.

i know you love me. i know you raised me the best way you knew how.

i don't blame you for all we've been through because it got us to where we are now. and i like
where we are now.

while i have spent one and a half decades hurting, i've also spent half a decade healing.

you have spent over half a century hurting.

it is quite hard for me to write about how your mental illness has affected me because i feel like
i am doing something wrong. i feel bad making you seem like a monster when i know you are
not.

i forgive you for projecting your mental illness on to me.

you were in pain. you are in pain.

i wish i could make it better for you. but you need to do that all on your own. and if you ever
decide to try to heal, i will be right by your side.

through it all, you always did what you thought was best for me. i couldn't see it at first. i
couldn't understand how love could take on so many different forms. but now i do.

you showed me love in the only way you knew how.

you taught me how to change a tire. you spent hours getting attacked by mosquitos practicing
soccer with me. you drove 12 hours through the night to get me to a lacrosse game. you stayed
at a job you hated for decades just to provide for us.

through the yelling. through the tears. you did the best you could.

i am proud of who i've become. i am thankful that the best of you, lives within me.

“love you forever” GBYKYS always,

Your Krispy

“generations”

I.

born from
generations of women
who lived their lives
sacrificing parts of themselves
to support weak men

women who smile into the eyes of their loved ones
when underneath
they are hurting

women who break their backs to raise their children
while he remedies his pain
with a glass of whiskey

his existence
relies on
her pouring herself out
to fill him up

i am made up of
the strong women
who came before me
parts of them
live within me

the part of them that is
kind
caring
supportive
is built into my bones

it's no wonder
that is is my second nature
to find purpose in
supporting
restoring
weak minded men

i spent my whole childhood
seeking the approval

of a mentally ill
father

i spent much of my young adulthood
begging for validation
from a mentally ill
college boy

it only makes sense
that i would fall into
a relationship
where i exist
to fill him up

toxicity
burns
throughout
my
veins.

ll.

today i chose
to transcend

they laid the stepping stones
so i could climb higher

for them
i rise

for them
i break generational trauma

for them
i refuse to pour myself out
to make a man feel whole

today
i let the light in.

“where the light pours in”

since i let the light in

i smile at myself in the mirror when I brush my teeth in the morning
i put lotion on after i take a warm, hot shower
i am mindful about what food i put into my body
i forgive myself when i make a mistake
i say no to people when their request compromises my well-being or happiness
i remain non judgemental of my thoughts and desires
i replace *i'm not good enough* with *i'm doing the best i can*
i make sure i get enough sleep
i have a daily skin care routine
i speak kindly to myself
i am friends with the voice inside my head

but the most important difference
isn't some major revision or colossal life change

it occurs moment to moment
second by second
as i now live where
i honor each moment for what it is
just as it is

sometimes
there are heavy moments
and difficult moments
but i don't run from them or fear them

i invite them in
sit with them
chat
ask them why they're here

i respect what each moment brings
be it a gift or a lesson
then i let the moment go
take a step back
release the pain

and look to where the light pours in.

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