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Age: 15, Grade: 10

School Name: Owosso High School, Owosso, MI

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Category: Poetry

Self-Hatred Is a Waste of Time

the kids in her classroom call her names.
“thing” “it” “that” as though She is a foreign monster
they’ve never seen.
this behavior—incited by bigotry and ignorance—
leaves her alone for seven out of 24 hours in the day.

She’s only five, but her knowledge is impeccable.
her parents tell her the other kids are only jealous of it.
She likes frilly dresses and
pretending to be disney princesses.
She never leaves any animal in the streets.
be it a puppy or a rat, She offers her home as their own,
though it never lasts long.

She likes to hike and play catch.
She has a knack for them.
outside of school She belongs.
outside of school She is loud,
her laughter leaving no face without a smile.

She doesn’t have any interests in the classroom.
in school She is eats lunch alone.
in school She is quiet.
She doesn’t raise her hand and keeps her head down.

the kids in her classroom call her names.
“he” “him” “boy” as though She is an imposter, the anomaly.
this behavior—incited by bigotry and ignorance—
leaves her alone for seven out of 24 hours in the day.

She.

when i was four God was belief.
Baba said “we love God,” and i listened.
when i was four went to church every Sunday, the pews brown,
crosses carved into the end of each one to remind me of my reason for being.
when i was four i didn’t know God’s story,
for the hymns were incomprehensible to a child.
each one a language spoken in a tongue that twisted my own.
when i was four i didn’t know why we were saved from our sins
but i was told we were—i listened.

i don't know what belief is.
i still go to church... i don't know God's story.
maybe i am still a child.
my vocal chords vibrate, still, the words having little meaning.
i don't like confession, but i'm told to tell my soul, my sins.
i don't know how to give into faith,
if there's something to believe in at all.

i cannot spare a moment of time on something that is not reliable.
so why am i lacing my fingers again, hoping to hear answers to the hymns. to find my faith.

Belief.

Envy is the green poison ivy behind my house; hidden to the plain eye.
It causes an itch I can't scratch—contorting my upper limbs in an attempt to relieve this sting.

It is buried dark places, rough with scabs yet to become scars.
We play hide and seek, only, I don't live in this house. I'm searching for something in a place I am unfamiliar. This will always be unfamiliar...

Sometimes, we need to leave that sting alone, for it will leave in time.
Our skin will be soft with acceptance, glowing with confidence. Our bodies will be our own light shining on our hiding places. Our hiding places, ours

Ivy.

7. A funeral is sad. All the tears overflow from our eyes, every stream comes to meet the river of our sorrows. The tissue box passed around in place of the donation bowl at church service. Each piece is used in an attempt to stop this endless flow of emotions. I don't understand what it is to lose someone, until I wish to see them once again.

9. I don't cry. My stream is one of a river that has since dried up. The sweat I wipe from my brow replaces the stains under my eyes. I'm indifferent—still not fully grasping the reality. I pray to God that I won't have to pass another box of tissues.

Four months later—9. I don't understand why I'm forced to feel this way. Like a drought, I am only able to let the plants wilt in the heat of my misery. This time, I throw up, regurgitating what I can't put into words, or tears. The butterflies that didn't not allow me to eat breakfast are still there as I blow my nose once again.

10. I see my Baba cry. It is the first time I am not caught up in my own grief to realize I'm not alone in this. I hug her tightly like I will never experience this hold again. She doesn't let me go and I don't wish for her to. The tissues skip around us and I understand the pain a little more.

13. I'm older now. I have not accepted this loss. I imprison the tissues—angry, selfish. It is not a sin to miss someone; it is a sin to have greed, but I do not pass them for a while... I remember three years ago, I'm gripping the box the same. I pass them on.

15...
