

World Mental Health Day 2024

In a hospital room somewhere, a daughter says goodbye to her mother. She holds her hand and tells her that she'll live on for her. Because on her face she has her mother's eyes and her eyes are the windows to the souls that existed before her. They have the same eyes. As one pair shuts, the other pair stays open, looking softly at the hands that raised her. On a street nearby, a father is fighting for the last of his bloodline. His son is lying on the floor, bleeding out. A smashed up bottle in his left hand. His father cries out to a God who isn't listening and asks him how it is possible that a *God-fearing family* raised a child who was *never* afraid to see the other side. Meanwhile, I'm settled in my small box-room, watching the trains drive through the station. I imagine what it would be like to die like *she* did. To feel the train's metal body engulf my being, gouge out the sockets of my eyes, transect me and kiss me goodnight as my brain replays the course of my life in a six minute window. I wonder if *she* thought of me in *her* six-minute 'best-moments' recap and I wonder if she ever wondered how I'd react to *her* death. I wonder whether she was in the room that held her small family tight on the day of her funeral, when they were all dressed in black. Her adult granddaughter reassured them all that this was for the better while she cried like a child. The pain has ended now, she'd say with tears in her eyes. The cycle repeats. I wonder whether she saw the blood that seeped through the sleeves of their shirts and the dirt that dusted the legs of their trousers, the product of a rough night out. I wonder whether she had seen me returning to her homeland this September with the raging spirits of my psyche ripping through my clothes, allowing men to see the parts of me that should stay hidden during the day and all through the night. I'm *not* talking about my body. I wonder whether she was *scared* when he invited me into his room to cry and equally *disappointed* when I returned the favour. He painted me as a child, a caricature. He painted the version of me who once begged their father to wipe their tears, and then he took advantage of that childlike weakness. I wonder if she was *afraid* for me. *Of* me. I wonder if she was *disappointed*, whether she'd proclaim that grief didn't justify mania, and mania didn't manipulate me into sitting on them wet benches in Mazury, wondering if *she* had regretted it. I wonder if she *regretted* it. When she looks at me sticking needles into my skin as an attempt to memorialise the person she once was, when she stares at her silhouette formed in black ink on my right forearm, when she sees what I've become. Who I've become. I wonder if she *regrets* it. I wonder if she's *disappointed* in me. I *wonder*. The cycle repeats, but I have learned that grief is the price we pay for love *and* I'm going to be in debt forever *and* where there is life, there *is* grief, there is *always* grief. Similarly, where there is grief there *is* life. These statements coexist. The cycle

doesn't

have

to

repeat.