



# Joy Screaming From Her Limbs

a multimodal self-portrait anthology

By Grace Katharine Schmidt



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*For Kristi, Ken, & Jarrett.*

*Special thanks to Dr. Beth Frye for inspiring me  
and helping me relearn my love for poetry.*



## Author's Note

Thank you for reading *Joy Screaming From Her Limbs*. The pieces included in this anthology include my own poems, written over the course of my final semester in graduate school, as well as ones written by various poets who have inspired me in some way. I use writing to process my thoughts and emotions, and I have found poetry to be a really great way for me to express those feelings.

I have always had a tendency to focus on the small details, noticing the way the light reflects through glass, the movement of a bee, the calmness and strength within the ocean. The poems included here are a reflection of those small details, and of the beauty of being still, even within sorrow. Their arrangement tells the story of femininity, hope, loneliness, and grace. I hope as you read, you notice these small details in my writing, and perhaps begin to notice them in your own life.

- Grace Katharine Schmidt

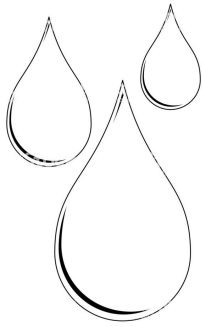
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## **rain**

pitter pat, pitter pat  
outside my window  
as I sleep

pitter pat, pitter pat  
so calm and soothing  
as I dream

pitter pat, pitter pat  
makes me feel safe  
as I wake

pitter pat, pitter pat  
makes me feel cozy  
as I snuggle my blanket

pitter pat, pitter pat  
puts me in a trance  
as I rise

# untitled

everyone needs  
a rainy day  
and a cup of  
tea  
sometimes

# I Like the Simple Fact of Tea

After Amy Ludwig VanDerwater

I like to sip a cup of tea.  
More calming than coffee.  
Black, with a little sugar and a splash of milk.  
It slows down time.  
It is a smart drink, tea.  
I like the simple fact of tea.

# I Find Peace

After Joyce Sidman

I find peace in the lazy doze of Saturdays  
and in the beat of a pounding run.

I find peace in the comfort of Your arms.  
I find peace in the quiet scent of lemon and jasmine.

I find peace in the pitter patter of the rain outside my window  
in the early morning:

pitter

pitter

pat.

## beauty mark

Too often, we look in  
the mirror  
and see an imperfection,  
a defect.

What if we looked at ourselves  
and instead saw  
a beauty mark,  
one of many  
on our  
beautiful,  
beautiful  
bodies.

# Phenomenal Woman

Maya Angelou

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.  
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size  
But when I start to tell them,  
They think I'm telling lies.  
I say,  
It's in the reach of my arms  
The span of my hips,  
The stride of my step,  
The curl of my lips.  
I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

I walk into a room  
Just as cool as you please,  
And to a man,  
The fellows stand or  
Fall down on their knees.  
Then they swarm around me,  
A hive of honey bees.  
I say,  
It's the fire in my eyes,  
And the flash of my teeth,  
The swing in my waist,  
And the joy in my feet.  
I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.



Men themselves have wondered  
What they see in me.  
They try so much  
But they can't touch  
My inner mystery.  
When I try to show them  
They say they still can't see.  
I say,  
It's in the arch of my back,  
The sun of my smile,  
The ride of my breasts,  
The grace of my style.  
I'm a woman

Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

Now you understand  
Just why my head's not bowed.  
I don't shout or jump about  
Or have to talk real loud.  
When you see me passing  
It ought to make you proud.  
I say,  
It's in the click of my heels,  
The bend of my hair,  
the palm of my hand,  
The need of my care,  
'Cause I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

## **tattoos**

do you ever  
see art so  
beautiful,

you say to yourself,  
"I must have this  
on  
my  
body."

## beach

the beach  
her waves  
beat for none  
but herself

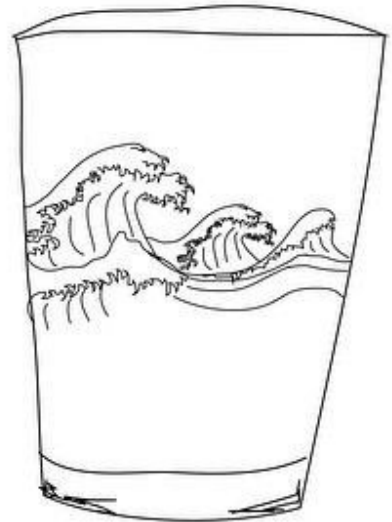
crash against  
the sand  
then pull back  
into herself

# **i am water ...**

Rupi Kaur

i am water

soft enough  
to offer life  
tough enough  
to drown it away



## the pink sandbucket

the pink sandbucket  
sits quietly on the beach,  
watching the young girl  
and her mother,  
each, at the same time,  
enjoying one another's  
presence and living  
within their own  
existences.

the little girl  
runs toward  
the ocean, joy  
screaming  
from her limbs,  
as her mother  
and the  
pink sandbucket  
watch by.



## For Kristi

this is  
a love letter to  
my mother.

my mother,  
the badass hiker  
who discovered her  
passion  
later in life.

my mother,  
who gave her all  
in raising us right  
even without her own  
mother  
as a  
guide.

my mother,  
overprotective and  
willing to do  
anything  
for those she  
loves.

I could say more,  
but I'll leave it at,  
I love you.



## **evergreen**

After Valerie Worth

Evergreen on the lawn  
says nothing:  
stands tall,  
quiet.

Protects those  
in the house on whose  
lawn  
the evergreen resides.

Guardian  
over the birds  
and other small creatures  
who have taken residence  
in her large branches  
and comfortable shade.

## **sun**

After Valerie Worth

The sun  
is warm on my back,  
despite the chill  
in the  
air.

I can still see  
traces  
of the snow  
from two days  
ago,

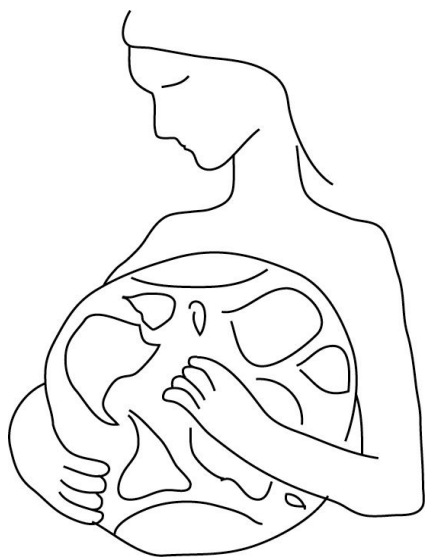
Yet the sky  
is kind and inviting,  
the trees on the horizon  
kissing her cheeks.



# love letter to the world

Rupi Kaur

the necessity to protect you overcame me  
i love you too much  
to remain quiet as you weep  
watch me rise to kiss the poison out of you  
i will resist the temptation  
of my tired feet  
and keep marching  
with tomorrow in one hand  
and a fist in the other  
i will carry you to freedom



# 'The White Sun's Light

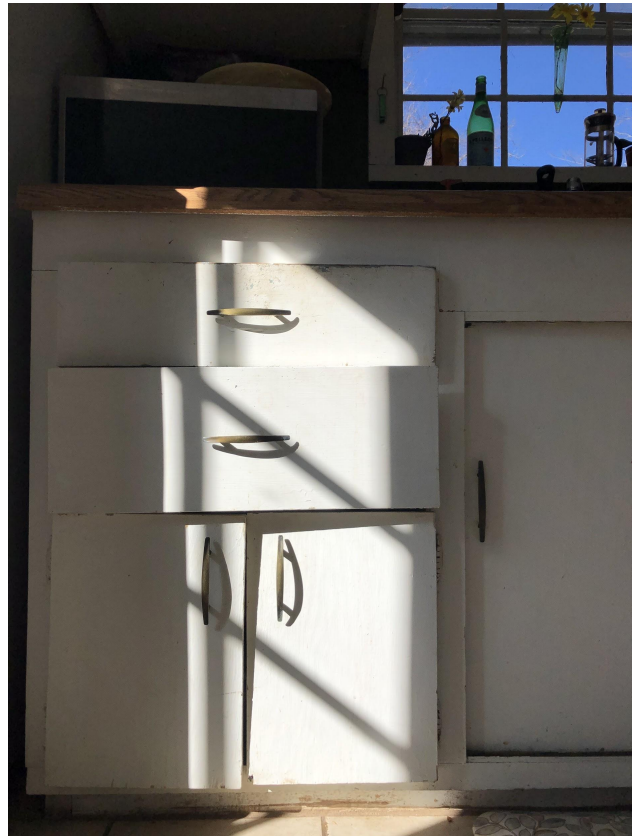
After William Carlos Williams

So much depends  
upon

A white sun's  
light

Shining with bright  
joy

On the wooden  
countertops.



## Found Poem

After H.M. Bouwman

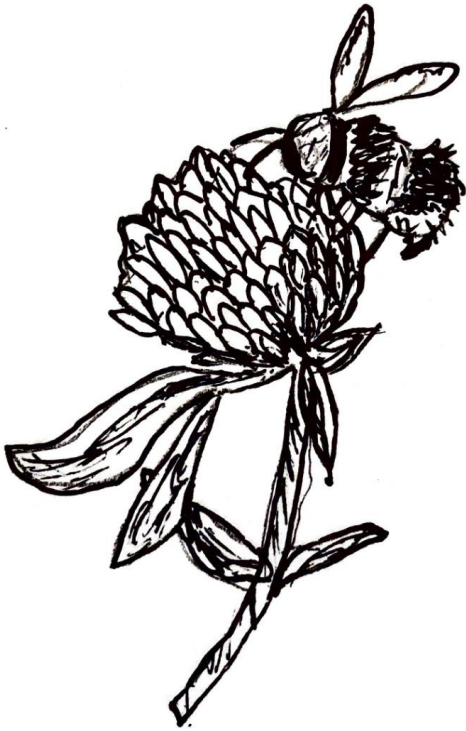
Slow and bright,  
morning filtered through  
the thick trees ...  
A good summer day.

## loving the breeze

my delicate leaves  
bright and green, sparkle in sun  
and sway gently on

## untitled 2

the bee  
floats around  
looking  
for its next  
mate



## untitled 3

there's so much  
chaos  
in the world  
but still i have  
you.



## untitled 4

how do you  
make me so calm

when the world  
is on fire

when the world  
is in flames

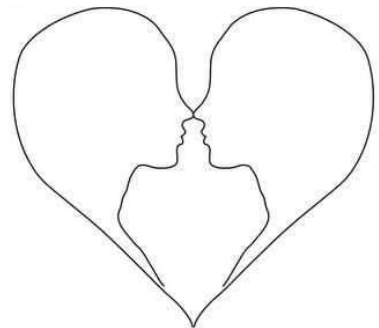
when the world  
has gone crazy

how do you  
keep me so calm?

## our souls are mirrors

Rupi Kaur

god must have kneaded you and i  
from the same dough  
rolled us out as one on the baking sheet  
must have suddenly realized  
how unfair it was  
to put that much magic in one person  
and sadly split that dough in two  
how else is it that  
when i look in the mirror  
i am looking at you  
when you breathe  
my own lungs fill with air  
that we just met but we  
have known each other our whole lives  
if we were not made as one to begin with





# When I Am Among My Friends

After Mary Oliver

When I am among my friends,  
I feel loved,  
heard, seen, known.

When my friends are away,  
and I am alone with my feelings,  
I feel dread  
and loneliness  
and sad.

When I am among my friends,  
especially those who know  
me deeply,  
the sadness slips away.  
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

## untitled 5

I wish  
I could fully  
convey

fully  
put into words  
the loneliness  
I feel.

How overwhelming  
it can be,  
especially when  
it hits you  
all at once.

## Trying to Matter

"Just look at us, all of us, quietly doing our thing and trying to matter. The earnestness is inspiring and heartbreaking at the same time."

—Amy Krouse Rosenthal, *Textbook Amy Krouse Rosenthal*

It can be really hard, trying to matter. What is the point of it all? Life is so needlessly hard, sometimes. We work ourselves up, trying to make it all work in this sad world. Why do we do it to ourselves? We were born to be free, wild, and happy. But so often in life we become the opposite. Having a faith, a reason for it all, makes it a bit better. But even with a faith, we turn away from our real, beautiful selves, and fall into the depression, the pity, the darkness of it all. Just look at us, all of us, quietly doing our thing and trying to matter. The earnestness is inspiring and heartbreaking at the same time.

# Bride

Maggie Smith

How long have I been wed  
to myself? Calling myself

darling, dressing for my own  
pleasure, each morning

choosing perfume to turn  
me on. How long have I been

alone in this house but not  
alone? Married less

to the man than to the woman  
silvering with the mirror.

I know the kind of wife  
I need and I become her:

the one who will leave  
this earth at the same instant

I do. I am my own bride,  
lifting the veil to see

my face. Darling, I say,  
I have waited for you all my life.

## endnotes

After Amy Krouse Rosenthal

Life isn't fair.  
It's just fairer than death,  
that's all.<sup>1</sup>

There is no magic cure,  
no making it all go away forever.<sup>2</sup>

So we beat on,  
boats against the current,  
borne back ceaselessly  
into the past.<sup>3</sup>

But wherever they go,  
and whatever happens to them on the way,  
in that little enchanted place  
on the top of the Forest  
a little boy and his Bear  
will always be playing.<sup>4</sup>

Afterall, tomorrow is another day.<sup>5</sup>

It's a good story. I'll tell you.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The last line of *The Princess Bride* by William Goldman.

<sup>2</sup> The last line of *Wintergirls* by Laurie Halse Anderson.

<sup>3</sup> The last line of *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

<sup>4</sup> The last line of *The House at Pooh Corner* by A.A. Milne.

<sup>5</sup> The last line of *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell.

<sup>6</sup> The last line of *A Little Life* by Hanya Yanagihara.

All was well.<sup>7</sup>

Oh, my girls, however long you may live,  
I never can wish you a greater  
happiness than this.<sup>8</sup>

Thank you God. Thanks an awful lot.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The last line of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* by J.K. Rowling.

<sup>8</sup> The last line of *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott.

<sup>9</sup> The last line of *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* by Judy Blume.









*Self-portrait*  
Grace Katharine Schmidt  
pen on receipt paper



## Notes

This section serves to reflect on the pieces I have included in this anthology. Each reflection explains why I chose to include the piece, how it connects to me, and/or the significance of the piece.

**rain** (*p. 1*) - I chose to begin my anthology with this piece about rain because it's such a peaceful and quiet entry into my heart. I wrote it one slow Saturday morning after waking to the sound of rain bouncing off the ground outside my bedroom window.

**untitled** (*p. 2*) - This poem comes right after "rain," which I included because even though I love sunny days, sometimes you just need a slow and gray day and some tea.

**I Like the Simple Fact of Tea** (*p. 3*) - This poem was inspired by the poem of the same name by Amy Ludwig VanDerwater. "The Simple Fact of Tea" is about the calm that tea can bring, and it seemed to fit right in with the first two poems I've included.

**I Find Peace** (*p. 4*) - This poem was inspired by the poem of the same name by Joyce Sidman. It describes the things in my life that bring me serenity, and reflects the things that take away the loneliness and depression I often feel.

**beauty mark** (*p. 5*) - What woman can't relate to looking in the mirror in the morning and feeling ashamed of some part of her body? The world teaches us to hate how we look, and I wanted this poem to reflect the opposite, to show that we are able to love ourselves for exactly who we are.

**Phenomenal Woman** (*p. 6*) - This is the first poem I have included written by another poet. I love the body positivity with which Angelou writes "Phenomenal Woman." She conveys such strength and confidence, which felt perfect to include directly after "beauty mark."

**Tattoos** (*p. 8*) - I currently have three tattoos and plan to get several more in the future. When I got my first one during my freshman year of college, I came home for summer break and my mother didn't talk to me for a week. Since then, she's come around to the idea of tattoos, though she's still a little pessimistic about them—"what about when you're older and they sag on your skin?" But I've never seen the problem with that. Everyone sags a little as they get older—why should that stop me from putting art on my body to make myself a little happier and the world a little more beautiful? Tattoos, for me, are a reminder of things I believe in: love, individuality, faith, and the beauty of the world.

**Beach** (*p. 9*) - I wrote this poem sitting on the sand at the beach, as my boyfriend lay next to me on our blanket. Looking out at the ocean, the water reminded me of a

strong, powerful woman, living and loving all for herself.

**i am water ...** (p. 10) - This poem, written by Rupi Kaur, felt perfect to include immediately after “beach.” The personification of water as a sweet but strong woman figure is such a classic image that I really relate to—I can be soft as needed but I will fight and stand up for myself and others I love.

**the pink sandbucket** (p. 11) - Another poem I wrote on the beach. Something about being on the beach inspires me to write. I had noticed the sweetest little girl, wearing a long sleeve striped shirt and denim shorts, playing by her bright pink sandbucket down by the shore in front of me, with her mother sitting by, half-watching her daughter and the other half seeming deep in thought. I just found it to be such a beautiful moment and had to capture it.

**For Kristi** (p. 12) - This poem is a love letter to my mother. I always want to write about my mother—she’s been such a major influence in my life and I see a lot of myself in her—but I can never seem to capture everything I feel about her in my writing. One day I’d love to write a book about my mother and all that she’s gone through in her life, all the feelings I know she has but doesn’t always share, all the things she maybe wishes she could have done with her life but chose to have a husband and children instead. But for now, all I’ll say is: I love you. Because I really, really do.

**Evergreen** (p. 13) - “Evergreen” was inspired by the poem “grass” by Valerie Worth in her book, *all the small poems and fourteen more*. Throughout the semester most of these poems were written in, we focused a lot on making the everyday beautiful. I struggled with this a bit because the majority of my poetry writing in the past has focused on emotions I feel and relationships I have with others, and less on objects. But I realized that even objects can come alive and be written with beauty and grace if you just take the time to find it within them. The evergreen tree in my front yard spoke to me as a protective figure, guarding over her residents both in the house and in the natural world around her. This fell in perfectly with the theme of strong women and mother figures I’ve created in this anthology.

**Sun** (p. 14) - “Sun” was another short poem inspired by Valerie Worth. There is just something I find so special and magical about the sun. It has the ability to light up any day and bring out the goodness in the world. I struggle with depression a lot, and not seeing the sun on cloudy days can be really tough for me. But as soon as the sun comes out again, chances are that I’ll be outside dancing in her sunlight.

**love letter to the world** (p. 15) - This was another poem pulled from Rupi Kaur’s

writing. I had just finished reading *the sun and her flowers* when I compiled this anthology, and with everything going on in the world, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, this poem just felt perfect. I just want to protect the world from all the bad things that are happening, and even though it is tiring, we have to keep fighting if we ever want to make a difference. The world can be such a beautiful place, and we just have to treat her with respect.

**The White Sun's Light** (p. 16) - Can you tell I have a thing for the sun? Really though, I love the sun and the light it gives. Can you imagine a world with no sun? I certainly can't: without it, there'd be no life on our gorgeous planet, and really, what fun would that be? This poem was inspired by the poem "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams, and I tried to keep the structure pretty similar to my model, with the four stanzas of three words in the first line and one in the second.

**Found Poem** (p. 17) - I really enjoy the fantasy novels written by H. M. Bouwman, such as *A Crack in the Sea* and *A Tear in the Ocean*—they're so well-written and have the ability to transport their readers to different universes. This "found poem" is pulled almost verbatim from Bouwman's other novel *The Remarkable and Very True Story of Lucy and Snowcap*, which during reading I just found to be so poetic!

**loving the breeze** (p. 18) - "Loving the breeze" is a haiku I wrote that again examines the beauty in our world and the easiness that we feel on a bright, warm day with a light breeze in the trees.

**untitled 2** (p. 19) - "Untitled 2" serves as a kind of bridge between my love for the natural world and my human love. Like the bee, humans search around in their lives for someone to love and to trust, whether that be romantic love or otherwise.

**untitled 3** (p. 20) - I really love this poem. It's inspired by the love and comfort I feel with my boyfriend, who I will likely marry in the next few years. Even when it feels like the world is going crazy, I always know I can rely on him to make me feel safe. It's a simple poem, but it evokes a lot of emotion for me.

**untitled 4** (p. 21) - Like "untitled 3," this poem looks at the calm that I feel around my boyfriend in what can feel like the end of the world. I just don't know how he does it: I can get so emotional about things in the world, and yet when he holds me close I somehow know that everything is going to be okay.

**our souls are mirrors** (p. 22) - When I first read this poem, I immediately felt connected to it: it's exactly how I feel with my boyfriend. What's more, I have a tattoo on my arm that comes from a song in the musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, called "The Origin of Love." The song highlights the story of Platonic love, of

“when the earth was still flat and ... folks ... had two sets of arms, they had two sets of legs, [and] they had two faces peering out of one giant head,” and how we were all split apart and lost by the gods, doomed to always be looking for our other half in the world. That’s how I feel with my boyfriend—like he’s the “other half” I’ve been searching for, made by God as one from the same dough.

**When I Am Among My Friends** (p. 23) - This poem transitions from a romantic love to one for friends. I’m really grateful to have as many wonderful friends as I do, ones who support and love me no matter what. Inspired by Mary Oliver’s poem “When I Am Among the Trees,” this poem reflects the energy that I receive from spending time with friends, and the loneliness I feel when they’re gone.

**untitled 5** (p. 24) - I’ll be honest, I wasn’t sure if I would include this poem in this anthology. It’s not super often that I share about my depression and loneliness, and this poem especially, which I wrote to try to keep myself calm during a sudden but harsh depressive breakdown, is extremely vulnerable for me. The world can be really overwhelming at times, but writing is something I know I can always turn to to process my feelings.

**Trying to Matter** (p. 25) - This is the only piece I’ve included in this anthology that is not actually a poem, but rather a short entry from my journal. It’s inspired by (and includes at the end) a quote from Amy Krouse Rosenthal’s not-exactly-a-memoir, *Textbook Amy Krouse Rosenthal*. The quote really resonated with me, because I struggle with finding a balance between how beautiful life is and how vainly we strive to make meaning out of life.

**Bride** (p. 26) - I really love this poem by Maggie Smith that I found in the *New Yorker*. It describes a woman being her own bride, living for herself. Including it near the end of the anthology kind of brings everything together, back to the beginning, with “beauty mark” and “Phenomenal Woman.” It helps inspire me to be my own bride, to be happy waking up to myself each morning, even on the bad days, and realize that darling, I am the one I have been waiting for all my life.

**endnotes** (p. 27) - This last poem was inspired by the ending of *Textbook Amy Krouse Rosenthal*. It is completely composed of last-lines from some of my favorite books throughout my life; I have a connection to each one in some way or another. It felt like an appropriate end to the anthology, as it is the “endnotes,” afterall. Plus, it felt like it wrapped everything up together in a perfect little bow: love, hope, loneliness, and grace.

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## About the Author

Grace Katharine Schmidt dislikes loose hairs that stick to people's shirts, rush hour traffic, and mushrooms. She likes the way the sun comes in through the window in the early morning. Grace is five foot, six and one-quarter inches tall. She has been declared as "fashionable" by the fourth graders from her student teaching classroom, and she has been a vegetarian since eighth grade.

