

Joy Screaming From Her Limbs

a multimodal self-portrait anthology

By Grace Katharine Schmidt

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Published 2020 by Grace Katharine Schmidt.

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.

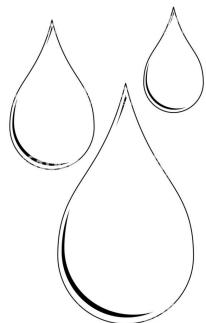
I have always had a tendency to focus on the small details, noticing the way the light reflects through glass, the movement of a bee, the calmness and strength within the ocean. The poems included here are a reflection of those small details, and of the beauty of being still, even within sorrow. Their 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

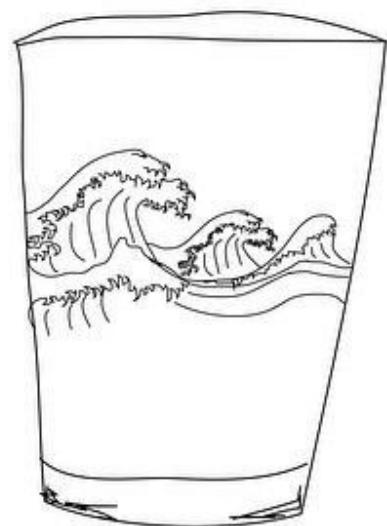
crash against
the sand
then pull back
into herself

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.

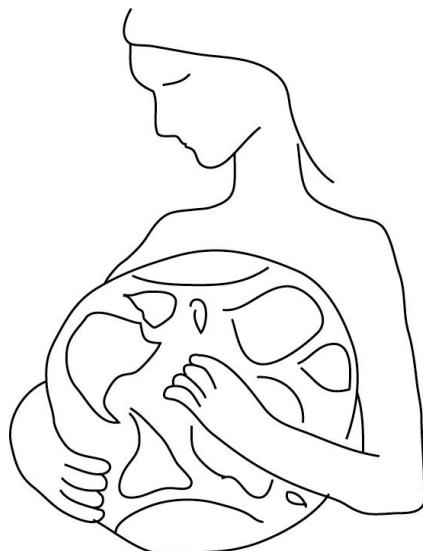
I can still see
traces
of the snow
from two days
ago,

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

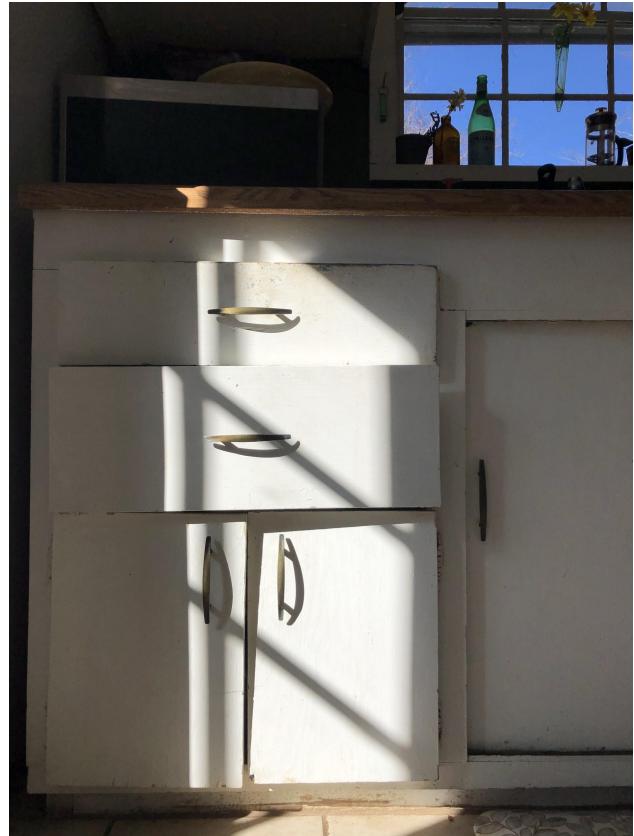
After William Carlos Williams

So much depends
upon

A white sun's
light

Shining with bright
joy

On the wooden
countertops.



Found Poem

After H.M. Bouwman

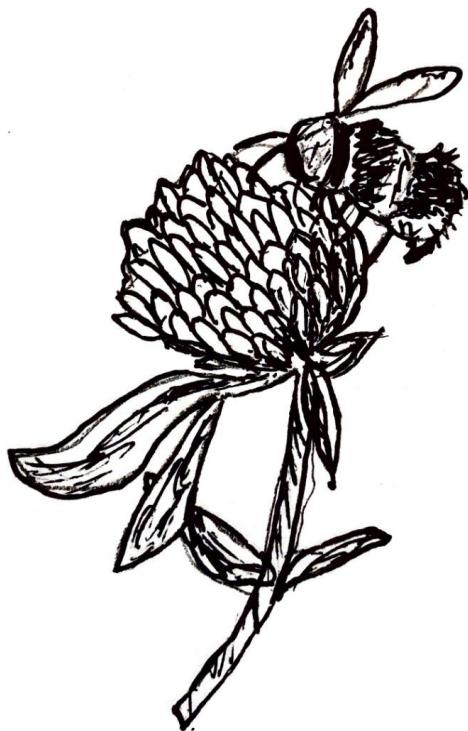
Slow and bright,
morning filtered through
the thick trees ...
A good summer day.

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

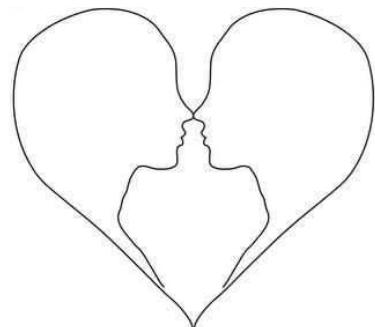
when the world
has gone crazy

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 heartbreakingly 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 heartbreakingly 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.¹

There is no magic cure,
no making it all go away forever.²

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

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.⁴

Afterall, tomorrow is another day.⁵

It's a good story. I'll tell you.⁶

¹ The last line of *The Princess Bride* by William Goldman.

² The last line of *Wintergirls* by Laurie Halse Anderson.

³ The last line of *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

⁴ The last line of *The House at Pooh Corner* by A.A. Milne.

⁵ The last line of *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell.

⁶ The last line of *A Little Life* by Hanya Yanagihara.

All was well.⁷

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

Thank you God. Thanks an awful lot.⁹

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

⁸ The last line of *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott.

⁹ 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.



