

Angry
Prayers

for
FURIOUS
SURVIVORS

Tom Towell



My anger is good. My anger is important.

My anger matters.

My anger is proof that I care about myself.

That others want to silence my anger, that they want it to stop, proves it has power.

If people actually thought a survivor's anger would do nothing, they wouldn't try taking it from me.

If no one will get angry on my behalf, then I will.

If no one will side with me, then I will.

If no one will hear me, then I will.

If no one will do this for other survivors, then I will.

If you need someone to be angry for you,
then here's mine.

I don't know how to say this, so I'm just going to write.

What you have here exists because I grew up in both an abusive family, and in a Pentecostal Christian family. Both aspects were traumatizing. Both taught me that I was a girl, and that being a girl meant that I had to be small, sweet, accommodating, forgiving. I couldn't fight back, I couldn't get angry, I couldn't name what happened to me, I couldn't hold them accountable for it, I couldn't believe that I deserved anything else.

I was only allowed a forgiveness that kept me silent, a healing that meant God would scoop away all the bad and bury it so that no one else would ever find out. I grew up knowing that the ones that hurt me had all the Christian forgiveness offered to them, and I would always be the unrepentant sinner. Unless I broke myself down. Unless I lied. Unless I stayed silent. Unless I continued to believe that I was just as at fault for what was done to me.

What you have here exists because prayer is a thing I like to reclaim. I don't believe anymore, not in God, not in the supernatural, not anymore.

But prayer. I don't *believe* in prayer, in that, I don't think of it as petition. But I *like* prayer: as proclamation. As a way of ordering the "I want" and the "I wish" in your head.

I believe in the prayer of songs, in quotes from books and movies, in things your loved ones tell you that fill your head with warmth on every playback. I believe in the repetition of it, because I know the repetition of abuse. I know the words and messages and stories and pain that gets repeated, looped and threaded to your mind until its the only thing you hear. I believe in prayer as the ritual that drowns out those voices, the way I used to sing worship songs at night in my room, to drown out my fear of demons.

I believe in the prayer of love, in its sturdiness, in the way that it teaches you how to see yourself through the eyes of someone who cares. The way that it can change your confidence, your demeanor, how you carry yourself.

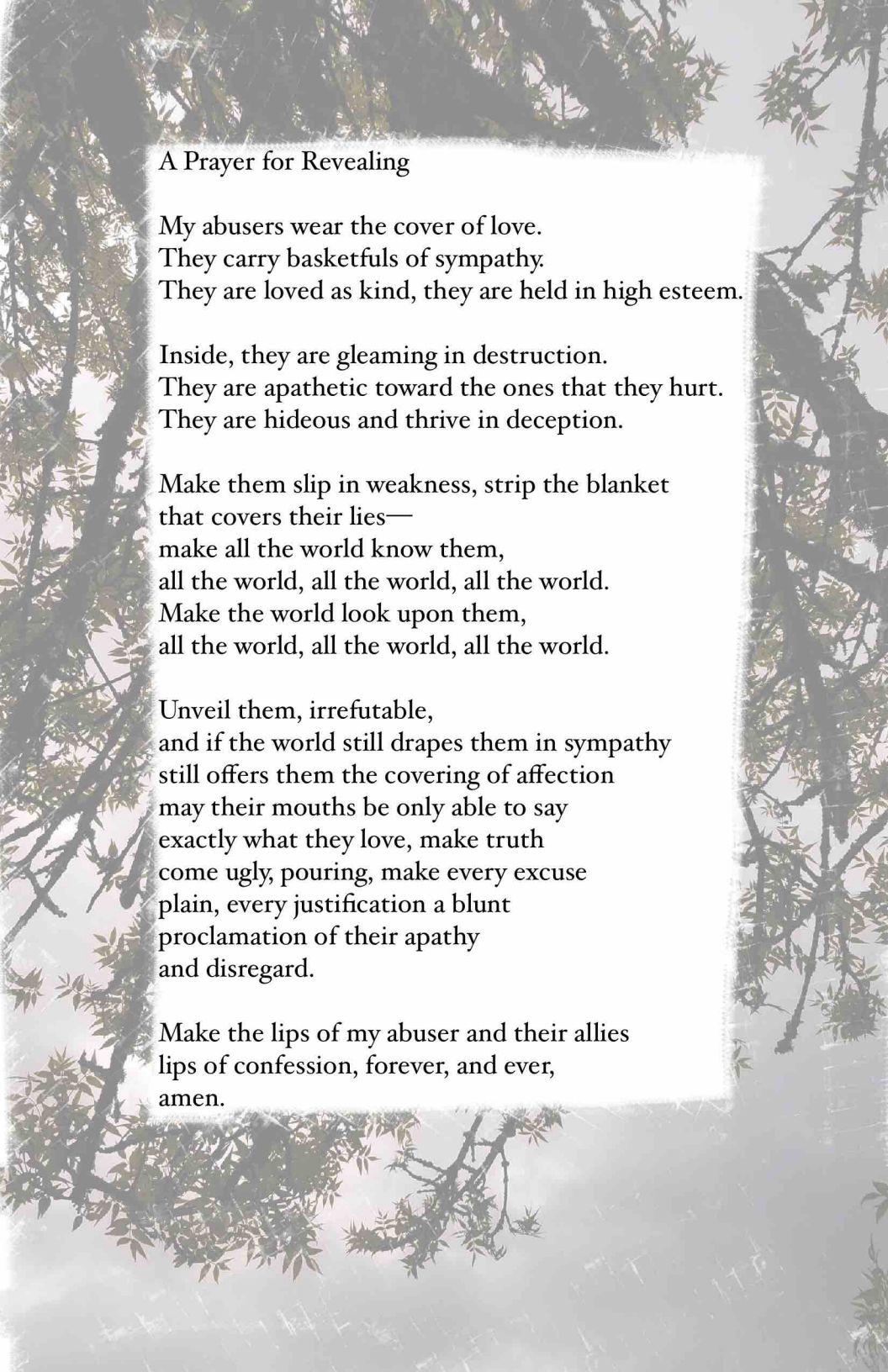
And I believe in the prayer of anger, in its voice, in its strength, loud enough to unbury the past and call it to account. I believe in it for its ripple effect as well, for the way that you can teach people to be angry on behalf of themselves just by showing them they're worthy of that anger.

It took me a long time to learn to be angry, and it's the easiest thing that can be destroyed in me. All the survivor advice I've ever read presumes that anger is default, that it is ugly and destructive, and will eat you up. But they convinced me that I was so worthless, I couldn't begin to let myself be angry. Anger belonged to someone who had value, who was worth the emotions of it.

Before I could be angry, my friends were angry for me. And then music was. And then it was mine, full of fire, fury, and the phrase *no more!* and then fueled by that anger, I could escape.

I don't know what you need. I assume if you picked this up, you want some angry prayers. At first, I attempted to make these as universal as possible, but I realized that that couldn't work. I don't know who you are, I don't know who your abusers are. I don't know what happened to you, what they did, what they said, what would never apply to you, what might be triggering for you to read. These are mine, they apply to my abusers, my mind, my body. All I can hope is that there's something here that helps you, something that puts new words in your head, a new repetition of thought that crowds out the things your abusers taught you.

And at the very least, if all you need is someone to be angry for you because you don't know how to be angry for yourself, or you don't believe you're worth it, then hold this in your hands and know: I'm angry for you. The abuse you suffered was wrong, you didn't deserve it. And I'm so angry on your behalf.



A Prayer for Revealing

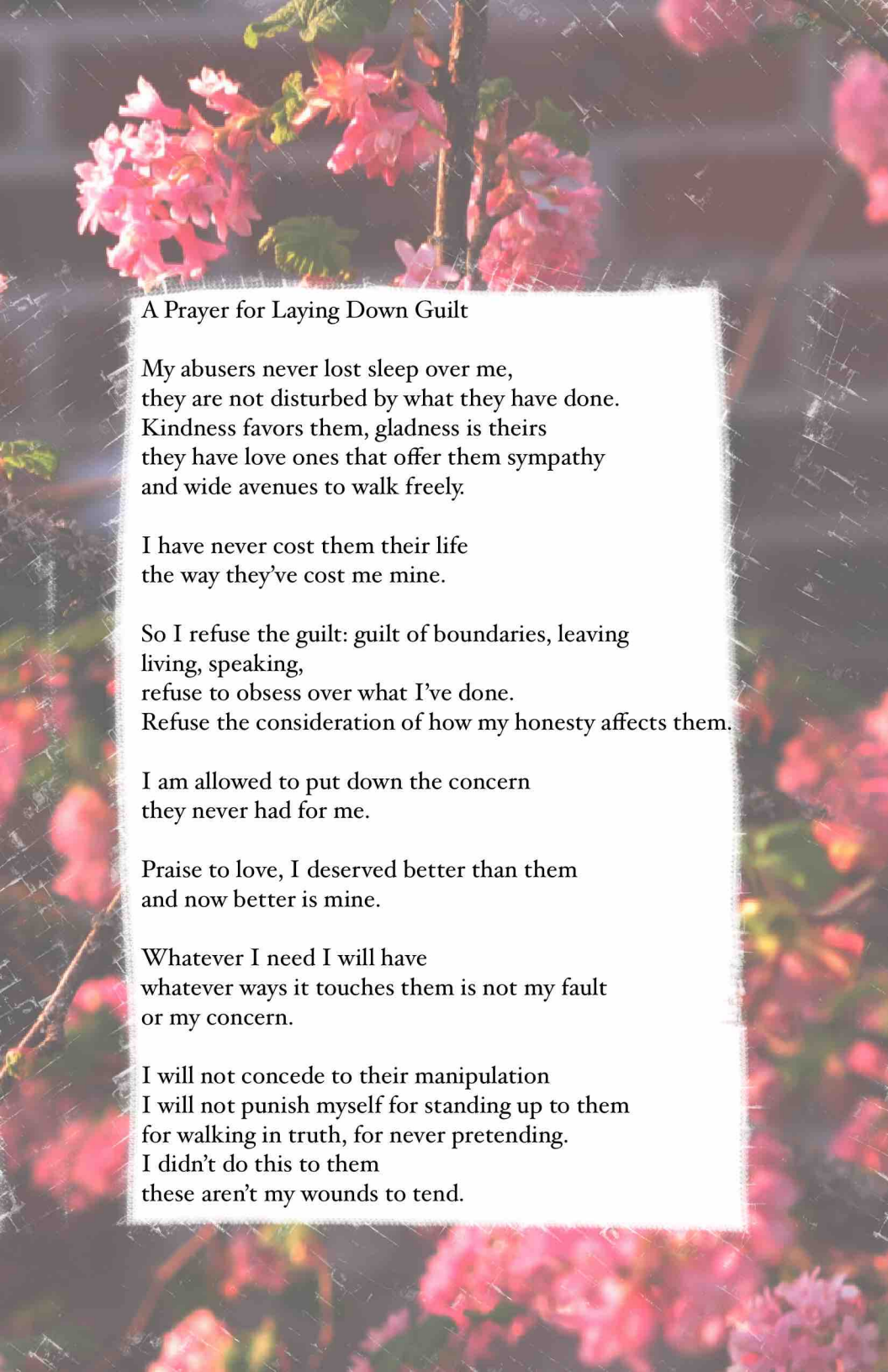
My abusers wear the cover of love.
They carry basketfuls of sympathy.
They are loved as kind, they are held in high esteem.

Inside, they are gleaming in destruction.
They are apathetic toward the ones that they hurt.
They are hideous and thrive in deception.

Make them slip in weakness, strip the blanket
that covers their lies—
make all the world know them,
all the world, all the world, all the world.
Make the world look upon them,
all the world, all the world, all the world.

Unveil them, irrefutable,
and if the world still drapes them in sympathy
still offers them the covering of affection
may their mouths be only able to say
exactly what they love, make truth
come ugly, pouring, make every excuse
plain, every justification a blunt
proclamation of their apathy
and disregard.

Make the lips of my abuser and their allies
lips of confession, forever, and ever,
amen.



A Prayer for Laying Down Guilt

My abusers never lost sleep over me,
they are not disturbed by what they have done.
Kindness favors them, gladness is theirs
they have love ones that offer them sympathy
and wide avenues to walk freely.

I have never cost them their life
the way they've cost me mine.

So I refuse the guilt: guilt of boundaries, leaving
living, speaking,
refuse to obsess over what I've done.
Refuse the consideration of how my honesty affects them.

I am allowed to put down the concern
they never had for me.

Praise to love, I deserved better than them
and now better is mine.

Whatever I need I will have
whatever ways it touches them is not my fault
or my concern.

I will not concede to their manipulation
I will not punish myself for standing up to them
for walking in truth, for never pretending.
I didn't do this to them
these aren't my wounds to tend.

A Prayer for Remorse

May you know exactly what you are.

May you see yourself in eternal clarity.

May you live forever with death reeking on your hands,
your clothes smelling forever of blood.

May you wake forever into memory dreams, the
terror of what you've done, crying out for relief.

May you be granted only the relief you deserve.

May truth, justice, and the protection of victims,

hear this:

Let my abuser know no sleep
no trust
no moral peace
no rest
no light
no gladness

For as long as their lack of remorse breaks me.

Prayer for the Return of Power

My abusers have something that is mine.
They took out my core, they made me feel
empty, and devoid of self,
whenever I walk I still feel their hands and feet
making me stutter and stumble
spinning me downward.

Give it back. Make the power go out of them,
make them stagger as it leaves and arrives to me.

In the top of my head: power
In clarity: power
Down my spine: power
Through my pelvis: power
Down my legs, into my knees,
into every movement of my body: power!

My body is mine and we are one
the empty places now buzz with life
the colorless places are now bright
my presence is sugar sharp
and beautiful.

I crush their hands when they reach out
their feet bruise when they attempt to trip me
their fists grasp at air, and even their anger
fails to reach me.

Give me myself, give me all of myself,
power in body, power in mind, power in strength
all the days of my life.

A Prayer for Grief

Here is what I have lost.

I put it in front of me.

I have lost:

the belief in an undercurrent of love,
that the arc of the world bends toward justice
that truth wins out over lies,
that kindness wins out over cruelty,
I have lost family, and friends,
time, and the sense of a future
I have lost meaning
and excitement
and hope.

Their graves are scattered under my feet
when I walk death directs me
and my sadness is deeper than tears can soothe.

I gather my grief, here, now.
I hold it like I would hold
that small child I was, their pain greater than
expression, in those moments
that their future started unfolding before them
hurt and broken.

Breathe, mourn, live.

What's lost, is lost.
The damage traces scars across my skin,
there are futures that are now long dead.

All I can do is breathe; breathe, mourn, live.
In this cemetery that grew within me,
in the ghosts of myself that cry
for every life they could have been,
here now, I will mourn,
grieve every one of them
lay my flowers down
and then remember to live.



A Prayer for Grounding (quiet version)

Carve me out of the past.

May the tight fist of my abuser be broken off of me.

May the edges of my body be the edges of the present.

Take their hands off of me.

Make me belong to no other but myself,
(make it so, make it so, make it so.)

I am mine, mine is me.

Carve me out of the past.

Make the sensation of my body come alive,
make me know where I am
and see the world in clarity as it is.

Make me here. Make me feel my skin, my every breath,
the slow steadiness of this second, and then the next.

I am here, I am whole, I am awake within this moment
and the past is far behind me.

A Prayer for Grounding (chant version)

I am here, I am real, and I am alive
and there is no one else in my head
I am here, I am real, I am alive,
and there is no one else that owns me
I am here, I am real, I am alive
do you hear that sky? Do you hear that city?
I am here, I am real, I am alive,
I am here, I am real, I am alive,
and this body is mine, and this mind is mine
I can move in the way that I want
I can think the thoughts that I want
I can feel, I can breathe, I can live
I am here, I am real, I am alive,
I am here, I am real, I am alive
and it is good, it is good, it is good
I can talk to myself, I can think to myself
I can choose the places I go
because I'm here, because I'm real
because I'm alive and nobody owns me
nobody owns me, nobody owns me,
my body is mine, my mind is mine,
I am here, and I am mine, and I am me,
and I am me, and I am me, and I am me,
I am broken free, I am making the choice to
be who I want to be and go where I want to go
do you hear that sky? Do you see that city?
I am here, I am real, I am alive,
I am here, I am real, I am alive,
and it is good, it is good, it is good...
(can continue for as long as necessary)



Prayer for Disowning Them (abusive families)

Today I make a new name. Today I hold onto that new name.
Today their ties are destroyed. Today their relationship to me
is broken, gone. I am free. I am free.

Today, my family is created. Today my family is that creation
today I have new ties. Today those relationships
are blood now, here. I am free. I am free.

Today, if they think of me, I don't know it,
if they don't think of me, I don't know it.
Today, if they mention my name, it is the name
of one that's gone. I am free, I am free.

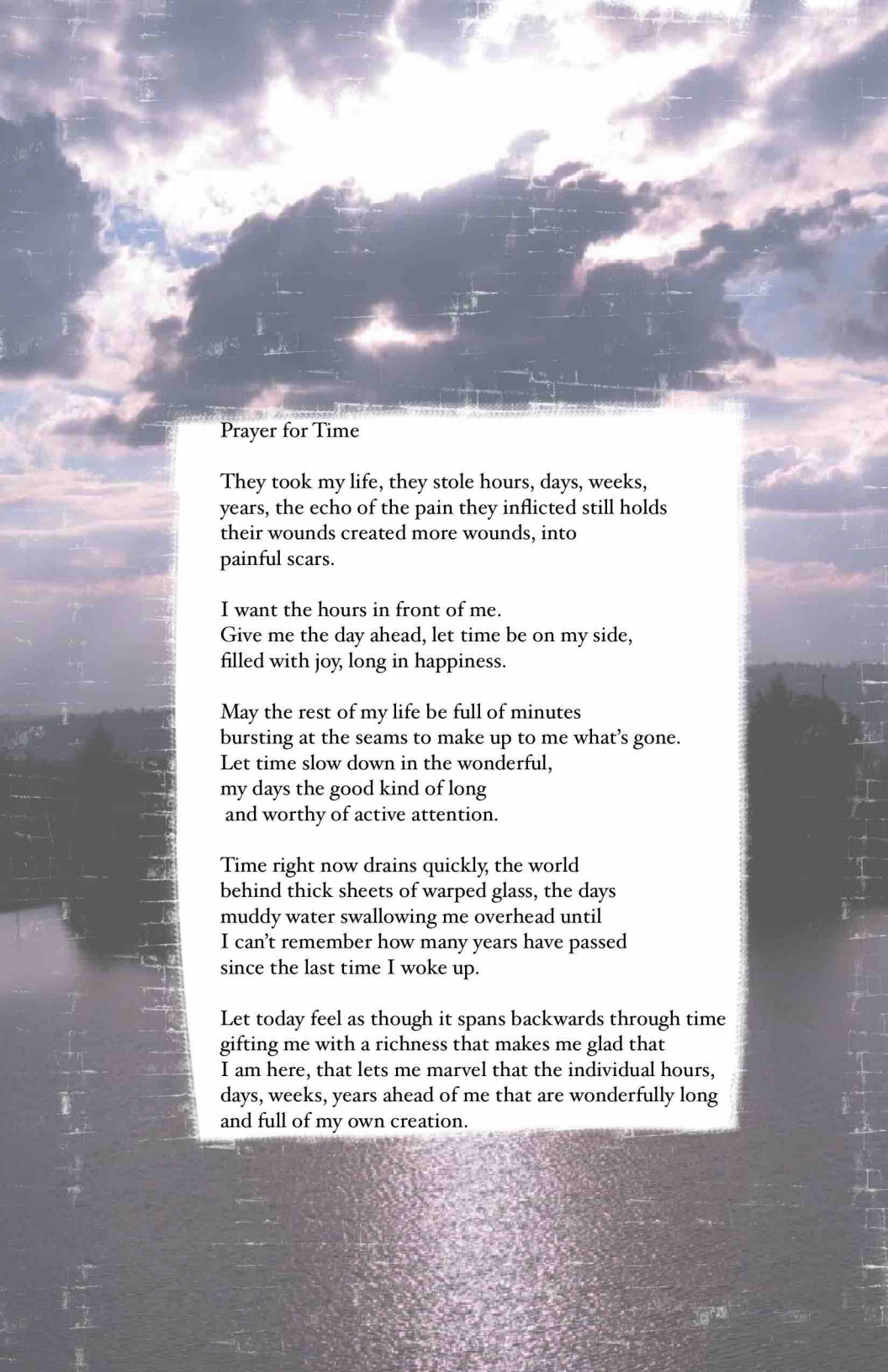
Today, if I think of them, I don't know them,
if I think of them, I put them in my mind's grave.
Today, if I mention their name it is unbounded,
they are dead to me, I am free, I am free.

For those whose parents hurt them,
we are granted orphanhood.
For those whose siblings hurt them,
we are now an only child.

For all of us with destructive families
who wish to be separated: here, I pray for all of us,
here I grant you this desire:
you are free, you are free.

We have raised ourselves, we have given ourselves
new names, new lives, new family,
today the old one is gone, today the old one
is in the grave, today they are dead, and we have
broken away.

And I am free, and you are free, and we are free.



Prayer for Time

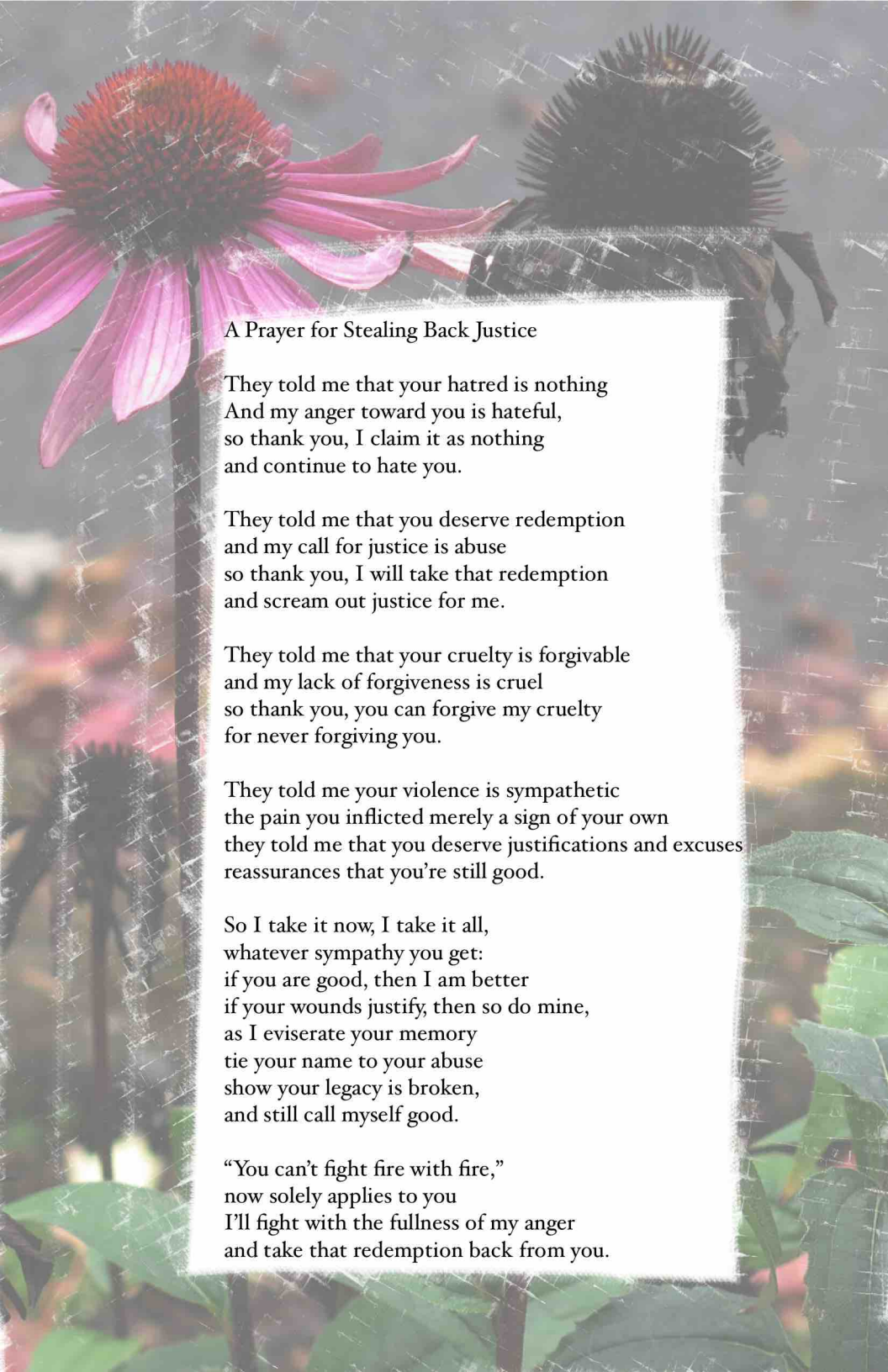
They took my life, they stole hours, days, weeks,
years, the echo of the pain they inflicted still holds
their wounds created more wounds, into
painful scars.

I want the hours in front of me.
Give me the day ahead, let time be on my side,
filled with joy, long in happiness.

May the rest of my life be full of minutes
bursting at the seams to make up to me what's gone.
Let time slow down in the wonderful,
my days the good kind of long
and worthy of active attention.

Time right now drains quickly, the world
behind thick sheets of warped glass, the days
muddy water swallowing me overhead until
I can't remember how many years have passed
since the last time I woke up.

Let today feel as though it spans backwards through time
gifting me with a richness that makes me glad that
I am here, that lets me marvel that the individual hours,
days, weeks, years ahead of me that are wonderfully long
and full of my own creation.



A Prayer for Stealing Back Justice

They told me that your hatred is nothing
And my anger toward you is hateful,
so thank you, I claim it as nothing
and continue to hate you.

They told me that you deserve redemption
and my call for justice is abuse
so thank you, I will take that redemption
and scream out justice for me.

They told me that your cruelty is forgivable
and my lack of forgiveness is cruel
so thank you, you can forgive my cruelty
for never forgiving you.

They told me your violence is sympathetic
the pain you inflicted merely a sign of your own
they told me that you deserve justifications and excuses
reassurances that you're still good.

So I take it now, I take it all,
whatever sympathy you get:
if you are good, then I am better
if your wounds justify, then so do mine,
as I eviserate your memory
tie your name to your abuse
show your legacy is broken,
and still call myself good.

“You can't fight fire with fire,”
now solely applies to you
I'll fight with the fullness of my anger
and take that redemption back from you.



A Prayer When Feeling Empty

The world is flat, and muted,
the edges of my body dissolve around
shapes that have no meaning, the sun
is fading into late afternoon when I cannot remember
waking up.

I am tired, and small, and run down,
I go through motions without a sense of light
other's joy feels abstract, their pain overwhelming,
I am calm only because I am too tired to fear
the things that would hurt me.

When all my gods are dead let me birth new ones.
When the universe no longer grows, when fate
is a liar, when the throng of spiritual reasonings
no longer resonate within me, give me a sign
that I still matter.

I need to breathe in laughter and breathe out tears
until I remember my name, until I remember
that I'm here for tomorrow, and the next day,
and then life will rise inside me again
and remind me to sleep because I
anticipate waking up again.



A Prayer for Rejecting the Lies

My abusers taught me to hate myself.

They made me believe I was stupid, disgusting, unlovable, incapable, ugly, and mean.

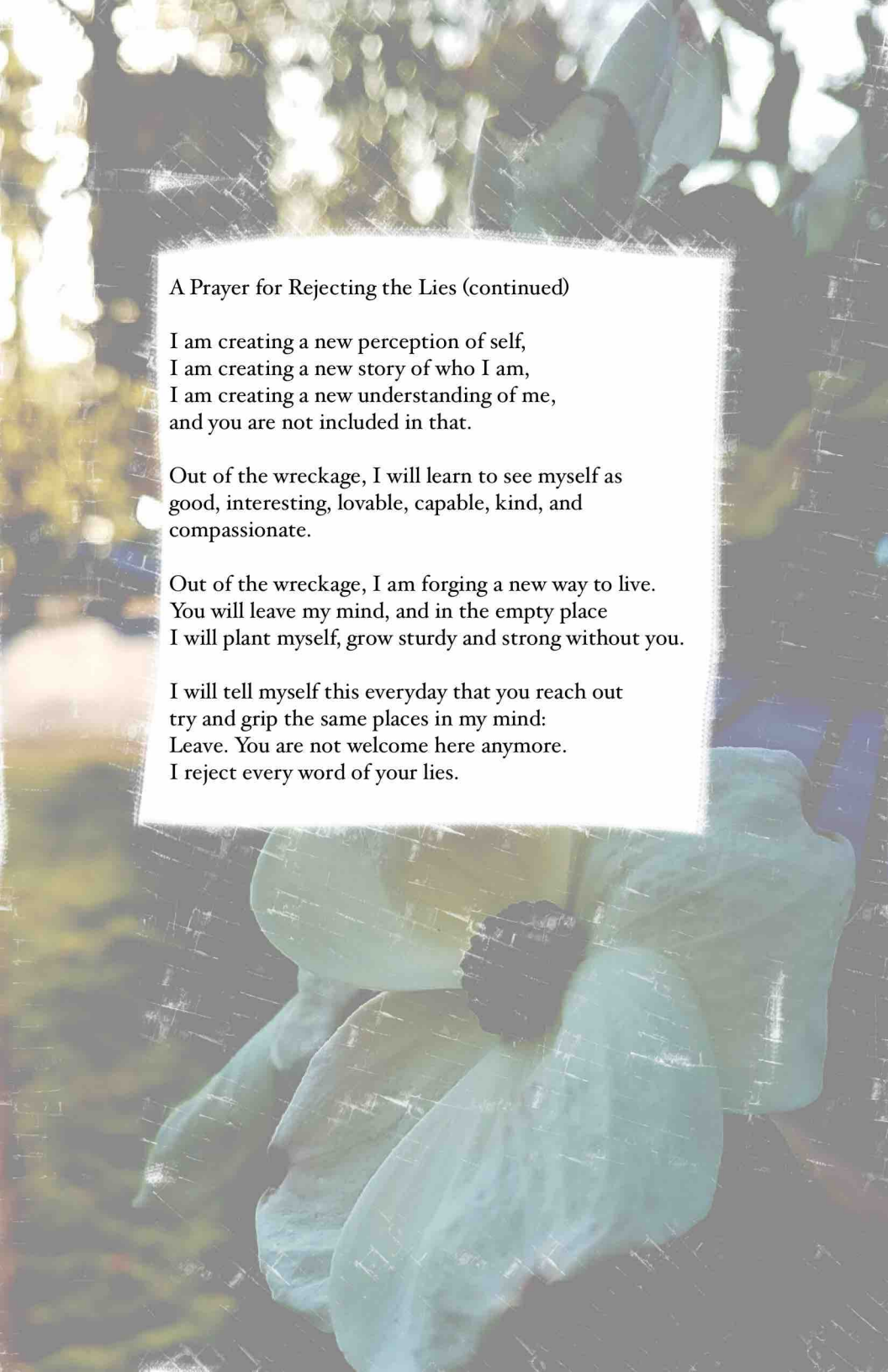
Today, I reject their lies.

Let their voices screech and then fade in the rebuke
the talons of their words slipping out of my head.

I speak to them now. Here is my proclamation,
my revelation, here I stand and shout:

You lied to me! You were always a liar!
You were always untrustworthy!

I refuse to believe you anymore
I refuse to let your words be worthy of consideration.
I refuse to see myself through your eyes.



A Prayer for Rejecting the Lies (continued)

I am creating a new perception of self,
I am creating a new story of who I am,
I am creating a new understanding of me,
and you are not included in that.

Out of the wreckage, I will learn to see myself as
good, interesting, lovable, capable, kind, and
compassionate.

Out of the wreckage, I am forging a new way to live.
You will leave my mind, and in the empty place
I will plant myself, grow sturdy and strong without you.

I will tell myself this everyday that you reach out
try and grip the same places in my mind:
Leave. You are not welcome here anymore.
I reject every word of your lies.

A Prayer of Self-Love

I have forged a life
I wasn't supposed to have.
I am renewing myself today
offering myself kindness
when I have only known hate.

My abusers put that cruelty into my head.
They made me believe that the scars they gave me
are proof I am broken.

Today I will no longer tell myself that
too much time has passed to be this hurt.
I will no longer hate myself for this pain
or loathe myself for what I can't yet do.

It is their voice that inflicted these wounds
and then called me failure for them.
It is their own cruelty that assumes
my struggle determines my worth.

Whatever I do today, whatever I did,
no matter how small, I will care more about myself
than they ever did. I will treat myself kinder than them.

I'm alive! How incredible—despite it all—
I'm alive!
I have kept my heart beating, I have woken up
this morning and chosen to carry myself through.
Today I will be kinder to myself than yesterday,
today I will praise myself for all I have done.



Thanks for reading!
I write about:

abuse, child sexual abuse,
complicit & toxic Christianity
harm in the name of
silence & community
the anti-apocalypse
the rejection of the end times

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Portland, OR

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My anger says I didn't deserve it.
My anger says nobody does.

My anger says I deserve this voice.
My anger says I won't let them play pretend anymore.
My anger says I won't be silenced.

My anger says I am worth the emotional cost of being angry.
My anger says the pain I experienced was an injustice
deserving of this anger.

My anger says I matter.
My anger says I care.
My anger says no more, no more, no more.

My anger is a kind of love.
My anger is a kind of hope.
My anger is a promise to myself
that I deserve a better life
and so do you.
so do you.

Bitter Tea
Hymnal

Tara Lowell