

Bleeding out the Wound until the Pain is Drained

I found out today that my beautiful, 17 year-old niece
Has been cutting
Up and down the sacred arm
She uses to nurture her little cousins
The same arm that, I have heard
Writes poetry so deep even the hardened would weep.

We have this in common,
She and I
A need to give voice to the wound
Or actions when sorrow is deeper than words can hold.

What is it about us women
That makes us turn our pain inward
Adding blood to a fire that already burns too hot?
If we were men we could easily heed to biological impulses,
Build power in pain as we aggress against others.
But our genes push for connection, community,
belonging.

So we bite our tongues
To save relationship.
Wail into pillows,
Blast music hard and loud to exorcise the rage.
And when even that doesn't work
We take razor to wrist
Like charlatans of old
Trying to bleed out the wound until suffering is drained
Or at the very least
Numbed for a time.

My head tells me I should give her some sage advice.
I am, after all, 30 years her senior,
And know a thing or two about opening skin to bleed out the wound.

But, were it possible,
Instead I would open my heart
Expose this precious love
And this root of my root feral protectiveness,
This blood of my blood belongingness,
Simmer it down to an essential drop I could place beneath her tongue
Like sublingual medicine quick to bloodstream
So that even her cells and very DNA

Could know the truth that
No matter how bereft she may feel in any transitory moment
She is deeply loved and deeply matters.

But, I am a therapist not an alchemist,
And I do not have an essential drop to give her.
All I have are words to give voice
And a prayer to whatever gods exist
That my words be the drop
That bleeds the wound until the pain is drained.

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