

A COLLECTION OF POETRY: MY LIFE STAINED IN INK

by

Elyse Semiha Aldikacti

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The thesis of Elyse Semiha Aldikacti is approved:

_____ Regina A. Sakalarios-Rogers, Ph.D., Committee Member	_____ Date
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_____ Jonathan T. Fink, M.F.A., Committee Chair	_____ Date
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Accepted for the Department/Division:

_____ Robert F. Yeager, Ph.D., Chair	_____ Date
---	---------------

Accepted for the University:

_____ Richard S. Podemski, Ph.D., Dean, Graduate School	_____ Date
--	---------------

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## ABSTRACT

### A COLLECTION OF POETRY: MY LIFE STAINED IN INK

Elyse Semiha Aldikacti

This thesis examines the nuances of womanhood, particularly the author's life experiences. The first section will be composed of poems relating to childhood, followed by poems relating to the young adult years, and finally poems dealing with adulthood. The poems will focus on various people, places, events and cultures that have influenced the poet. "My Life Stained in Ink" will demonstrate the nuances of womanhood with poetic prose from the poet's recollection of memories.

## THE WAR OF LIFE BEGINS

The blood shed resembled a battlefield  
With cries so loud not even gunfire could withhold the sound  
As panic emerged around the sterile room  
And blinding lights beamed down brighter than the sun  
My heartbeat was shallow, my skin not the color it ought to be  
Lungs still full of fluid, eyes unable to produce tears, yet I was alive  
And I was carried away as fast as I had been forced out  
Some time later the doctor returned and nonchalantly stated:  
“I’m sure you noticed the discoloration of her arm,” he started  
“We’ll have to monitor her, for her arm may not be functioning or ever grow.”  
With that he left without looking back, emotionless and unsympathetic

## TAWAS, MICHIGAN: AN INVISIBLE CITY

The place I learned to call home is far from the city life of Detroit in which I was born  
Nestled in the mitten of Michigan overlooking Lake Huron, the tiny fishing village of  
barely five thousand was a bubble of perfection.  
There were no black, no Asians, no Hispanics--I was as ethnic as they came.  
There were no malls, no Walmarts, no large corporations, only the corner grocery and  
local dime store.

Where movies only played one at a time months after their release date, everyone knew your name, and most people were related to each other.

“The City” was an all day excursion two hours away and going to McDonalds was a treat; the only two ice cream shops were closed in the winter and the phrases “Yous guys” and “Dontcha know” rolled off the locals’ tongues as if it were second nature.

### ONE OF THE ONLY MEN I’LL EVER LOVE

I wanted a sister, but I got a brother instead.

His diamond blue eyes and fair skin were unlike my chocolate eyes and olive skin.

I shared a room with him for as long as I could, because I wanted to protect him, although I didn’t know what I wanted to protect him from.

It was life, I later learned.

The innocent boy was struck on more than one occasion because of my mischief, yet he always took the blame.

I loved him because I thought I had to; I thought that’s what sisters were supposed to do.

It wasn’t until after I missed his high school graduation, after we were drunk together, and after I introduced him to pot that I wasn’t loving him because I had to, I wasn’t loving him at all.

If I loved him I would have gone to his graduation; if I loved him I wouldn’t have gotten him wasted at fifteen or smoked out so that both of our minds were so hazy we could barely move our legs let alone speak.

But with my brother, there never needed to be any words. Looking him in the eyes was more than words could express.



I wasn't alone anymore; I had him, my sweet brother.

One of the only men I'll ever love, without words.

### LOST, BUT NEVER TRULY FOUND

The ideal child held her father's hand in a crowd

Or wrapped her tiny arm around her mother's leg through a store,

But I was not the ideal child.

I hid around the corner to get their reactions,

To make them want to find me

As if they had been looking for me all their lives

Until one day they stopped looking

And I was alone,

Left behind without a second thought

So now I was the one searching

Through a sea of people to find where I belonged,

Worrying I had been forgotten

But when I found them I had misplaced something

The thing I had never realized was missing

I had lost myself

## THE UNSAID HEROES

It's hard to appreciate stories from the "good ole' days" when you're a child.

Like how Grandma grew up with nine siblings and food was scarce. How she had to pick an apple from the tree in her yard when she was hungry because grocery store food was too expensive. Or how Grandpa hitchhiked home after serving in the Korean War and worked summers out of state doing manual labor. When a loaf of bread was just over a nickel and vacations were only for the very well-to-do.

It's not until you're older that you realize how life has changed since they have been alive; how your own life has changed throughout the years. With the invention of computers and cell phones there's almost no reason to communicate with people face to face. And the world starts to become more impersonal because it's more convenient.

Vaccinations were created and no longer optional, but diseases such as cancer are found a dime a dozen. Yet, it is the stories that are passed down generationally that keep the eras alive.

I spent the majority of my childhood seeing my grandparents daily, almost methodically. I remember Grandma's dark blue eyes illuminating in front of the bay window as she rocked back and forth patting my back as she rocked humming to calm my nerves. How Grandpa's glasses slid down the bridge of his nose as he read the Bay City Times in his lounge chair while he explained politics and world news to me even though I could barely spell my own name. And how hard it was to move away from them.

Heroes aren't necessarily the people who save the planet from destruction or wear a cape with an emblem on their chest. They drive halfway across the country to see your accomplishments and never ask for anything in return. Just hearing their voice puts a smile on your face and when you hug them you breathe in a sense of belonging and security.

### PORT WINE STAINED BRACHIUM

The red pools of blood trapped on the surface of my left arm created a treasure map.  
But you felt sorry for me and wanted to erase the mistake that was made.  
So you could have a perfect child; the one you deserved.

The waiting room was cold and uninviting; it smelled like rubbing alcohol.  
A line of us waiting for our imperfections to be obliterated.  
Some on the face, some on the arms, and others in various places unseen by clothing.

We learned I was allergic to Valium  
when they force fed me the pills before pointing the laser to my tiny arm  
Zapping away the blood vessels that made me unique.

I cried and pleaded for them to stop as the room began to smell like burnt flesh.  
You held my hand and looked the other way.  
This wasn't my fault, this wasn't your fault, but you needed someone to blame.

### FOREIGN EXCHANGE

The air was thick with nostalgia  
creating a cloud over the bridge

between Europe and Asia.

The sun created a backlight

over the mosque

Illuminating it in the fire.

Stone roads wound

through the hills of Istanbul

to the flat in Bebek.

It was dusk when I learned

the disease

was eating away at your soul.

But you smiled at me

with your eyes

and your frail mouth.

I was looking

in a mirror

fifty years my senior.

I had only met you twice before,

but I loved you

as if I had known you forever.

I wish I had known you longer,

I wish I could have saved you,

I wish I believed in Allah

But I didn't,

and I could not,

and I don't.

### THE COMPULSION OF LOVE

In below freezing temperatures you stood outside for hours

Back and forth the hose moved into thin sheets of ice above the dead brown grass until it was thick enough to skate on.

The porch lights shone just enough to see the exhale of your breath make a cool stream that dissipated through the dark.

This went on for days. Every night, after dinner. It had to be perfect.

I always thought you had done it because you loved us, and that was true, you did, but I never realized it was also an obsessive necessity

Until I too stood outside for hours.

### INAPPROPTIATE TITLE

As the bitter alcohol slipped down your throat in the morning, I wonder what you were thinking.

When you were touching her body instead of your wife's, I wonder how you were feeling.

As you inhaled cigarette after cigarette, I wonder why she died instead of you.

When you sent your son across the world and never wrote, I wonder how you felt.  
As you buried her in the ground with your bare hands, I wonder how you looked in the mirror.  
When your grandchildren were strangers, I wonder how you were able to live with yourself.  
You looked after me when I lived in Istanbul, and I wonder if you did it out of guilt.  
When you looked in my eyes, I wonder if you saw her staring back at you.  
And I wonder why after all you've done, I still love you.

#### GREEN-EYED PERFECTION

There was always something hovering over my sister's shoulder.  
A weight, a burden, a demon, something that kept her feet planted to the ground, but was never visible.  
I was always envious of her:  
Perfect teeth  
Long legs  
Thin body  
Busty  
Long straight hair  
Hazel eyes  
Smart  
Sensitive  
Genuine.

I never even wanted her in the first place. I cried when I found it wasn't going to be just Drew and me anymore.

How could one person excel at everything they tried? She did. But little did I know that it all came with a price:

Constant stress

Studying all night

Not sleeping

Not eating

Forcing a smile

Afraid of failure

Afraid of rejection

Nervous

Self-conscious

I guess I never realized that angels can have broken wings, and that although I had not initially wanted her, my life would be empty without Iysha.

### IT WAS THE FIRST AND LAST TIME

It was dark in your bedroom, the night I gave you my innocence.

Your cold carpet rubbed my bare back raw between my shoulder blades.

I looked around your room wondering if this was how it was supposed to feel.

Dark, cold, alone.

Music played in the background; an old mix that we had listened to hundreds of times before.

I didn't say a word.

Your shaggy hair brushed against my neck and I could feel your hot damp breath stain my flesh.

I loved you for all the wrong reasons, but I still love you,  
Because you showed me who I really am.

#### A REMEMBERED LOVE SOON TO BE FORGOTTEN

He was the first man to hold your fragile body. With his strong loving arms he caressed your tender head, promising to protect you with his life.

Throughout your first night home, he tiptoed to your crib, and watched you breathe. Amazed at his beautiful daughter, he shed a tear and kissed your cheek.

As you grew, so did his love for you. He found new reasons to love you every day. Looking you in the eyes was looking at his perfect replica. The well defined nose, the beautiful big browns that sparkled in the light, you became him.

Dancing on his feet, you held his rugged legs and laughed like time would never move forward. At night you would clutch his shirt and wrap your legs around him feeling as if you were in the safest place on earth.

He sat you down and taught you the importance of life, unexpected love, and the motivation to try until you succeed. He told you how proud he was of you and your accomplishments and that no matter what, you're always his "little bee."

He started to grow frail slowly at first and then rapidly when you were least ready. The simple tasks that he would do mechanically became an obstacle. He made you promise to care for your mother.



His breathing started to shallow, like the beatings of your heart. Tears expelled your eyes just as his had when he looked at you for the first time. You put your head on his chest and whispered that you loved him while holding his hand as he had held yours.

I was not there to hold your hand as you watched him being lowered into the ground. I was not there when you cried yourself to sleep. I was not there when you cut the pain away, and I was not there when you shook so hard the world quivered.

Through our life together, I promised I would be there to hold your hand. I promised I would be there to wipe away your tears and kiss your eyelids. And I promised to take away the pain, and to hold you closer than ever before.

But you broke your promise.

#### A DANCE OF DISCOVERY

As we step upon tempo beat after beat  
Our bodies sway closer  
Your hand grazes mine with its warm callous touch  
And our eyes do a dance of their own  
Left--Right--Together  
A strand of your soft blonde hair caresses your face  
Yet I dare not touch it, not now  
As we inch closer to each other  
I smell your sweet scent entangled in your breath  
Left--Right--Together

And as we brush our cheeks I feel you pull me tighter  
Until there is no space to separate us  
Our lips meet and our eyes close  
But our feet still glide the floor  
Left--Right—Together. . .

### MY FIRST CHILD

Her paws were so tiny they slipped through the metal mesh she was trapped in  
When they took her out of the cage the first thing she did was urinate on the floor  
Her eyes were too big for her head and she looked more like a drowned rodent than a  
canine

She was covered in mites when I brought her home and had to constantly bathe her  
Her body was too fragile to share the bed with me the first few months  
But we bonded by hours of playing, training, and napping

When she was old enough to sleep with me at first I was scared  
What if I rolled over on her in the middle of the night?  
She has slept next to the crook of my torso ever since

The years passed and she grew grey but still kept her puppy-like personality

Sometimes, I swear, it looks like she's smiling at me  
My baby was growing up and growing old right before my eyes

Now instead of being afraid of rolling over on her I'm afraid of waking up to her lifeless

But she continues to smile, and reminds me everyday why I fell in love with her  
Because she needs no explanations or guarantees

### KALBIM ISTANBUL'DA KALDI

The smell of the Bosphorus races up my nostrils  
Penetrating the intricate vessels in my brain  
Until I finally take a seat admiring its vast depth  
The bright greens and blues are swirled by the fuel expelled from a passing freighter  
My thoughts are interrupted by the taxi honks and shouts from passerby's on foot  
The waves crash against the cement barrier and splash onto the sidewalk  
Seagulls flying South glide over head waving goodbye with their wings  
As the sun starts its descent, getting enveloped by the mosques on the Asian side of  
Istanbul

Some fishermen dock their rowboat and unload the day's catches into containers for the  
market

And I shove my hands in my pockets to escape the cool wind of the European gust  
I have forgotten the simple words in English, even the word "love" sounds foreign on my  
tongue

Yet I can never forget the way the Bosphorus smells on an autumn evening

### DUSK

On these cold winter nights I search for your warmth  
When the wind pushes the earth like a mother bearing a stillborn

But we're alive through our breaths that entangle in the midnight air

As white blurs the outside world we are inside one another

Until we too contribute our bodies to the white mass

A slate of flesh upon flesh until we become still, yet born anew

This night will pass, and I will wake up alone, again

With fresh tears falling like the cold winter sky

And my heart will push the earth, through my breath

#### THE WORLD CRIED

It was early in the morning and it began like every other,

But it ended like no day any of us had ever experienced.

The entire street was covered in what looked like dust

thrown up from hell and lined blocks on end.

Aside from shouts and cries, there was a deafening boom

Then silence with the lull of constant ringing.

Now it was us versus them; good versus evil

Yet we weren't as good as we portrayed.

A life is a life, no matter the age, the gender,

We're all on this Earth together.

And as much as that morning in September tore us away

It also brought us back together.

## THE LAST GIFT

We weren't expecting you; you were a surprise to all of us.

I hoped you were a boy so Drew could have a mate.

Iysha hoped you were a girl so she could dress you up.

And Mom and Dad just hoped you were healthy.

I understand that now, about how gender doesn't matter.

You scared me at first, for I was old enough now to understand

How delicate life is; how precious a birth can be.

Your eyes were like Grandma's, a dark blue vast sea.

You're growing up into such a beautiful girl.

It's hard to believe you're almost a teenager

Because when I look at you I see a child.

However you're not a child anymore, and neither am I.

You're the last gift we received.

Perhaps that makes you the most invaluable;

There will never be another proceeding you.

But more than that, you've been my favorite present.

## IT'S ONLY A DISABILITY IF YOU MAKE IT ONE

When we were younger, I never thought that you were different.

You smiled, you laughed, you did everything I did.

I remember talking to you on the phone after I moved.

You quoted an entire scene from a movie by heart.

But you see, Grant, I don't look at you like most people do.

Maybe that's why I'm special to you; I don't really know why.

That's the mystery of life though, we never know why some things are

The way they are; and maybe we'll never know.

There was a time when my life wasn't meaningful to me.

A time when all I wanted was for everything to cease entirely.

So as much as you may think that a small part of me has saved you

I want you to know that in fact it's quite the opposite.

I could never leave you alone. Because I need you as much as you need me.

And maybe that's what life's all about:

Needing to be wanted, and wanting to be needed.

### EXCEPTIONS

Flipping my car off of I10 sounded like a good idea

Except that it would be a waste of a new vehicle.

Stabbing myself in the heart would be romantic

Except the bloodshed would be unbearable.

Overdosing on pills would be simple

Except it's not a guarantee.

Blowing myself up would be intense

Except there would be no body for my parents to bury.

Hanging myself in the closet would be ironic

Except that my closet isn't tall enough.  
Cutting my wrists in the bathtub would work  
Except it would be slow and painful.  
Drowning myself would be poetic  
Except I'm no Virginia Woolf.  
Killing myself would free me from this pain  
Except I could never do that to any of you.

#### BLINDNESS

I peer into the vast caves concentrating on the cracks and crevasses.  
I see the sun-dried-tomato-stained vessels.  
I stare at your breath and your desert eyes moisten.  
I pierce at your drained windows that fill with luscious life.  
And as you thrust deeper into me they close from the outside world.

#### DEADLY VAPORS

The embers glisten so beautifully  
Like jewels waiting to be discovered  
But inside is decaying  
With every drag I take  
That satisfies my craving  
Instead of you

## I THINK OF YOU

When the leaves begin to wither

The green dies into brown and the smell of the air is heavy

When the wind starts to nip and I miss the trace of your lips

That once pressed upon my warm neck leaving an invisible print

When the snow begins to fall like pieces of heaven from the sky

And warm worn woolen mittens grasp my hands

Where your hands used to envelop

As people in charcoal coats huddle together in unison step

When nature sprouts life

And pollen trickles the air settling down on fresh grass

As you gave yourself to me as hives overflow with honey

And rain pitters and splashes against newly paved roads

And I think of you when the hot sun bakes the asphalt

As if to say "You should have been more careful; you should've stayed inside"

And when I walk on the sugar beaches alone I watch my footprints develop in  
the wet sand and look next to mine, where yours should be



## YESTERDAY HEALS TOMORROW'S PAIN

The mornings are filled with the pains of feeling the warmth of where your body used to be.

Trying to find a linger of a kiss, a touch; the solace that no one else can bare but you.

Your scent permeates the room next to mine, but each day fades as I breathe what's left of you.

To think of my life without you is to think of breathing without air.

The once vibrant colors of the world have faded into dim decrepit darkness.

And tomorrow comes and goes without thought or care.

You penetrated my heart with your hate over and over again.

And although I didn't think life could go on without you, I was wrong.

For I need to thank you, for keeping me from making the biggest mistake of my life.

## TITLES

Baby.

Girl.

Teen.

Woman.

Daughter.

Sister.

Niece.

Granddaughter.

Cousin.

Aunt.

Friend.

Girlfriend.

Student.

Innocent.

Cherished.

Hormonal.

Audacious.

Reliable.

Loving.

Entertaining.

Primary.

Amusing.

Part-time.

Trustworthy.

Devoted.