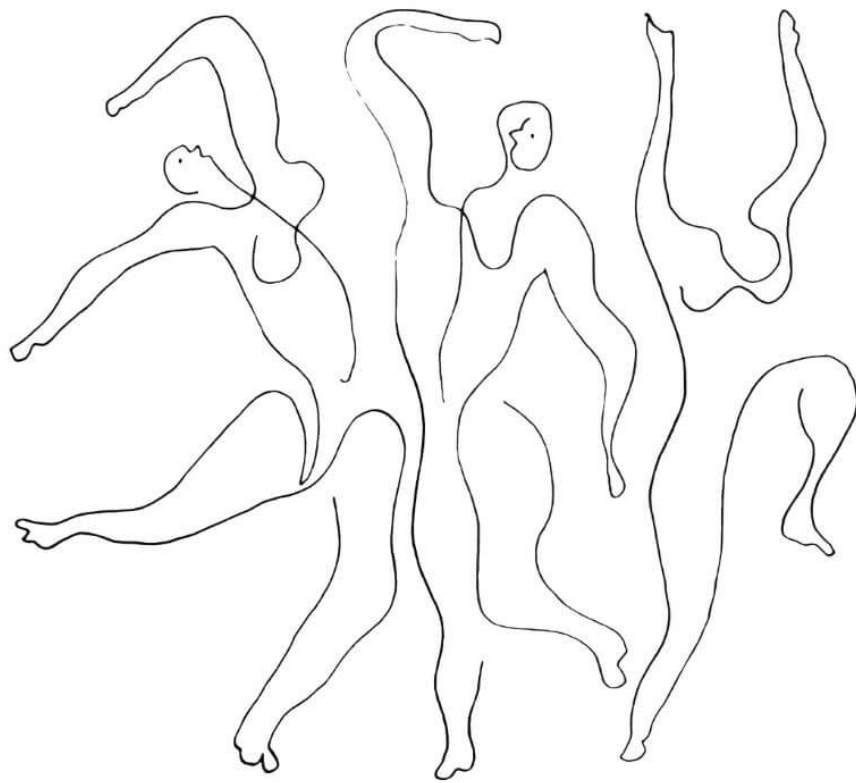


*relationship anarchy*



*monique chinonye ezechi*

*“When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time.”*

*– Maya Angelou*

*“I am constantly trying to communicate something incommunicable, to explain something inexplicable, to tell about something I only feel in my bones and which can only be experienced in those bones.”*

*– Franz Kafka*

*“Where there is great love, there are always miracles.”*

*– Willa Cather*

**Author's note:**

This is a collection of poems about relationships— platonic, romantic, familial, and more. I've spent much of the last year growing and learning; much of that growth has involved the understanding that no one type of relationship is any more important than any other.

It has involved learning that everyone around me is as flawed and complex as I am. It has involved heartbreak from people who I never expected to hurt me so deeply. It has involved vomiting into toilets and sobbing on cold tile and looking into the mirror at a person I don't remember. It's involved hours and hours of therapy, psychiatric interventions, and more and more crying. It's involved hurting myself before others could hurt me, and recognizing that pain is pain, no matter the source.

I am more self aware than I have ever been, though it is a double edged sword. I wish I could say I'm better now, that I'm more emotionally sound. All I *can* say is this: there is one relationship that matters more than all others— the one I have with myself. I hope that the past and future versions of myself are proud of who I am in this moment. I hope this small collection of poetry can make someone feel less alone.

Sending love and light, always.

*Monique Chinenye Egeh*

## **Ars poetica**

The other day, I split my wrist with an Xacto knife.  
I'm not completely sure if I wanted to die,  
although I'm not sure I'd have been upset if I had.

Blue blood escaped my veins, thick like the Blue Magic my brother used on his hair  
each day when we lived in New Jersey,  
the smell filling our upstairs bathroom as we fought to use the sink each morning.

A decade later, the smell fills my room like I never outran it;  
blood pools on my desk and oozes onto the floor,  
slow as molasses but only half as terrifying.

When I picture the house in New Jersey,  
I see plastic seat covers tugging at my skin on a sticky-hot day,  
tearing flesh when I stand and leaving

a cerulean patch behind.

*Published in The Rational Creature*

**binomial nomenclature**

*After Amaud Jamaul Johnson, "L.A. Police Chief Daryl Gates Dead at 83"*

Today, Onuwaburochukwu's name is Clement. A father breaks an  
overhead light and a  
mother cuts her feet  
on the glass. Elsewhere,  
video vixens take long  
drags of cigarillos because  
cigarettes are just too cliché.

Today, Chibuzor's name is Matthew. The sun sets over a  
methadone clinic  
lined with teeth and  
two lovers dance for the  
corpses beneath Lake Lanier.

Today, Chidinma's name is Michelle. A feverish child is labeled  
*ogbanje* and her forehead is  
split like a coconut. She is  
okay, she is  
okay.

Today, Iheuwa's name is Maureen. A grandmother cuts the  
head off a chicken—  
*chukwu n'enye*. And  
tomorrow, someone will  
call me by a name  
that is not mine.

*Published in The Rational Creature*

## heaven is a teenage girl

i see divinity in everything, i think.  
but lately, i've seen it most in you.

### iv. cherubim

in your softened gaze as you shield me from a sudden rainstorm, as you shield me from my mother's vitriol, as you shield me from the wandering gaze and touch of men who have never heard the word "no." your hands and feet are cast in bronze, but still, i am unsurprised when you envelop me in wings and fly, higher, higher, into our own garden of eden.

### iii. malakim

in your quickening pulse before you ask a question, like you're unsure if this is it, this is the one which will siphon the love from my heart. you are painfully human in those moments, taking my hand with childlike abandon; your vulnerability terrifies you, and it terrifies me, too.

### ii. seraphim

in the feeling of your lips on my neck, on my chest, tracing a path down, down, down. you hold my hand and wordlessly herald a message with your tongue, and when i close my eyes i can see the letters in the space between this world and the next: *holy, holy, holy*.

### i. ophanim

in the reflection of my face in your blue light glasses, my punch drunk smile superimposed over your eyes. it's uncanny: four eyes, a smile, and a lens flare obscuring that which is too beautiful to see. we are interlocking wheels, inextricably linked as we float amid heavenly bodies, as we become heavenly bodies, as we peer through the lifted veil and repeat in harmony

amen, amen, amen.

**L train vintage isn't even near the L train and I don't think that's fair.**

*After Rachel Zucker, "Mindful"*

I took the 6 to campus when I missed the bus on Friday before hopping on the R downtown to get crossfaded on a rooftop and last week I rode the 2 toward Christopher St. for brunch with a girl whose name probably starts with L or J or maybe even N, even though I took the 4 and transferred to the Q the night I got raped but the subway stopped running at 1 am so I had to Uber back home after, although I did try to walk to the bus stop before realizing that BedStuy can be unforgiving past a certain hour; anyways, I got off on Bleecker and walked for 15 minutes on the night I lost my virginity before limping the 40 minute walk back home with blood staining my underwear because the subway stopped running at 1 am and then I fucked that guy a few more times before I remembered I'm a lesbian and got off the C at West 4th to meet my third tinder date of the week before eating out at a Thai restaurant and then eating out between her legs while we listened to SZA and I walked home at 4 am in her sweatshirt because the subway stopped running at 1 am.

**a letter, in the spirit of emily dickinson and sylvia plath**

i've never trusted you

you choose the blues every day and never pay your dues—  
the landlord said he's kicking us out— do you hear me?  
he's— through.

you whisper sweet nothings in darkness— only  
and they wrap around me— like a straight jacket— no  
(yes?)  
like— my babysitter in the psych ward who left the room—  
only to let me pee  
every time you come— go— i wonder how you could ever claim  
to give a fuck about me

you brute, you hateful hateful smothering—  
i'm giving you the boot— do you hear me?  
i'm— through.

**misery loves company, but i don't.**

*after taylor swift, "we were happy"*

when it was good, baby, it was good.

it was so good, baby, it felt like god himself handing us  
goodness on goodness on goodness, baby.

until it was bad, baby.

when it was bad, baby, it was so bad, baby;  
it was under eye bags and bloodshot eyes and begging you, baby—  
please, baby, please, baby, don't go, baby.

but you'd always go, baby, because even when it was good, baby,  
we both knew it couldn't stay too good for too long.  
you couldn't be good like i was good, baby, so you had to go go go  
because it could only be good for you and never me, huh baby?

if you were bad, baby, then i had to be bad, too— isn't that right, baby?

are you listening, baby?

i think you're scared of the good, baby— you're scared of  
blood and breathing and be be being the kind of baby  
who can stay when things go from good to bad to breathtakingly sad.

i think i'm scared of the bad, baby— i wanted to  
take it from you, to be be be the baby who could bottle up the bad  
and be good for you, to make you as good as we used to be, baby.

i couldn't fathom being good without you, baby, and you couldn't fathom being bad without me.

but, baby, we both know it's not my job to make you good.

do you hear me, baby? are you listening?

it was never my job to make you good, baby.

i feel good, baby, and i am good.

when we were good, baby, we were so good.  
but, baby, we haven't been good in a long time.

**pain is a verb**

i perform suffering like  
womanhood:  
fingers in mouth forcing a  
smile wider, wider, wider—

the corners tear (*just the slightest bit*),  
and i remember how  
they say the black dahlia was  
tragically beautiful.

backstage, awaiting the  
curtain call, i remember  
something else:

i have always been exactly  
who i am:  
smoldering ash, broken glass,  
an unheeded warning.

## **divine tragicomedy**

### *i. inferno*

glass shards rain down and  
my mother is yelling and  
my father is yelling and  
my grandmother is speaking so softly that i strain to hear.  
my brother is the man of the hour,  
silent tears leaving tracks on his face  
as we all listen to his name uttered  
over and over (and over and over and over and over)  
in a sentence that we cannot otherwise understand.  
my sister holds him in her arms and cries but i just keep  
thinking about the shards of glass,  
thinking about falling backwards,  
thinking about succumbing to exhaustion,  
thinking about giving myself stigmata just for fun—  
as my family yells and yells and whispers.  
and when my veins run dry  
and the noise has stopped  
and the kitchen is empty,  
i see the glass in a trash bag by the door.

### *ii. purgatory*

a flock of birds swoops and soars overhead,  
wings beating with the deafening roar of a hurricane,  
or of a motorcycle gang at 3 am,  
or of a dmx song played in the fountain of washington square park  
while mediocre skater boys eat shit in front of  
impossibly pretty girls.  
sometimes i think about how people say that  
birds aren't real  
but who am i to question their reality? sometimes i think maybe  
i'm not real either—  
i might just be a social experiment,  
an android built to see if you could artificially engineer sadness.  
well, creators, i hope you're listening! you did it!  
my chest feels like it might explode most days  
and i don't think i'd be that surprised if it did.

a mediocre skater boy just ate shit in front of me,  
so i think it's time to go home.

*iii. paradise*

the bible is both an elegy and an ode, but isn't everything else, too?

## **sumbody**

*After Lydia Davis, "A Mown Lawn"*

sometimes, i dream of being Somebody.  
i want to be a Somebody that somebody sees and thinks:  
“wow, ain't that something!” (or someone. or Somebody.) i wonder if  
i'm just some body to somebody-- oh who am i kidding, i know  
some somebodies who think i'm just some body. but we're all  
some body to somebody. we're just  
some bodies that Somebody left when he went  
to go oversee something else, though  
sometimes i wonder if the thing was worth leaving all these  
bodies somewhere when nobody can even  
surmise where all these  
somebodies' some bodies came from! somebody  
hurt me once, but they could  
only hurt my sum body—  
not the sum of my body, just the body sum. the body was surely  
someone's idea of a sum body, a some body  
meant for somebody or maybe even Somebody.  
or maybe just the  
placeholder of a some body's sum until  
somebody summed up what the sum of somebody's some body body sum  
should be. my some body's sum body broke down as soon as  
somebody gave the some body permission  
to stop being a body sum and go find some body who is  
more than the sum of their sum body's some body--  
they're Somebody, damn it!  
or something like that.  
sometimes, i dream of being Somebody.  
i dream of being somebody's Somebody, somehow--  
more than just some body's body sum, sometimes.  
i think i'm just some body;  
a summary of some things done by some sum body somebodies  
who made this sum body become somebody become Somebody.  
but perhaps i've always been Somebody,  
just like i've always been the  
sum body of some somebodies' some body sums.

*relationship anarchy*

### **About the Author**

Monique Chinenye Ezech is a writer from Macon, Georgia.

She currently attends New York University, where she is majoring in Politics and double minoring in Creative Writing and Journalism. Her main areas of work are poetry and creative nonfiction. You can find more of Monique's work at <https://linktr.ee/moniqueezeh>.

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