

Corporality

Category: Making Assumptions

written by Ragini Gupta | May 17, 2019

My first memory is of me asking my mother about the man trapped behind the glass of the picture frame that lived amongst the gods in my grandmother's temple. I learned that he was my grandfather, and that he stopped breathing to go to a better place. I didn't understand why he didn't love my grandmother enough to take her along.

I started getting nightmares that would chase me into the middle of my parents' bed. Being snuggled between them was the safest I felt till I understood that the reason we remain alive at night, that we keep breathing, is because our brains don't sleep. I was scared that if my parents were asleep when their brains stopped working, they wouldn't be able to restart them. I'd try to match the pace of my breath with theirs, thinking that if we exhaled at the same time, we'd die at the same time, and I wouldn't have to worry about being left behind. The nights their breaths weren't in sync with each other's would leave crescent-moon shadows under my eyes.

When my grandmother left, she took my belief in the gods she worshipped with her. I wondered if the hours spent on the marble floor in front of her temple weren't out of devotion but rather out of her desire to be with her husband.

I read an article about how one can die of a broken heart and figured I was important enough to be so loved by her that I killed her by not giving enough love back, by not putting in the effort to keep our breaths in sync.

I believe there's narcissism in self-hatred, in obsessively finding ways to plead guilty as the murderer of the victim of a collapsed lung, lamenting over oneself.

One day being a body with a mind hurt so much that I realized I feared immortality more than my parents' death.

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