

A BOOK OF POEMS

*Wilder Than the  
Heart Within Us*



BY ERICKA CLAY



# Wilder Than the Heart Within Us

Ericka Clay

Published by Ericka Clay, 2023.



This is a creative work. Similarities to real people, places, or events are entirely coincidental.

*WILDER THAN THE HEART WITHIN US*

First edition. December 5, 2023.

Copyright © 2023 Ericka Clay.

Written by Ericka Clay.

Cover design by Ericka Clay.



# Too Soon to Cry

I hate this New World

that's the exact same  
as the old one.

Everyone has a part to play,  
and they hold onto their parts  
because what else is there  
to hold onto?

Your hair falls out.

Your teeth fall out.

But how pretty you'll be  
when you glue them back  
in.

It's a sin, all of it,  
struggling inside on a cellular  
level, but yet they laugh  
because  
it's too soon  
to cry.

# Never Getting the Point

You will die,  
and I will too,  
an unsaid thing  
when we curse  
in traffic, or watch  
the love we have  
grow cold, or push  
another “like” button  
and read the comments  
of everyone else who  
will die too but never really  
seem to know it.

How He broke through  
the depths of our distraction,  
our unwanted chains  
to the stone of our reality,  
and still closed eyes, closed ears,  
open mouths, always chatting  
about the next thing that will  
change our lives for the low,  
low price of never getting  
the point.

# The Blood of Our Hearts

You want to be mad  
and you are because  
the white picket  
fence is tinged yellow  
with this ever-present  
age. Did you really think  
that we'd all come  
together, evolved  
as we are with noise  
plugged in our ears  
and shades on our eyes?  
We can't see or hear one  
another, animals dulled  
in cages, throats raw  
with the sound of ourselves.  
The dust of us floats  
from the pages when  
we finger through the Word  
and find the past, the present,  
our future stained with ink.  
But who needs written truth  
with these bold erasures, wiping  
clean our minds but staining  
our hands with the blood  
of our hearts?

# Spring

Here I am, stilled in my December  
waiting for the stirrings of a life  
I already know is true. Have I lost  
You? No, I've just placed You away  
for the sick sadness of my mind's  
eye. Always weeping and never  
keeping focused on what a body  
grows in the ground, how the soil  
shakes until the signs of new life,  
break forth like fingers reaching mid-air.

# **Horrible**

Can you play it again?  
That old, horrible tune?  
The one where there's  
nothing more terrible  
than knowing everything  
you've ever loved has rotted  
away? But what's worse,  
the knowing that God  
will right out your wrongs,  
even make you smile a bit,  
and it's that smile that haunts  
your heart because what you  
loved most will never  
have the chance  
to see it.

## Aflame

The good You've given  
is sweet water, cold  
and cutting at all  
the things I've done  
and didn't mean to do.  
But deeply within me  
is the spark that lights  
my sin aflame, and knees  
now buckled, waist deep,  
I descend, Your good  
soaking through the wick.

## The Fruit of My Lips

The fruit of my lips  
is belly deep,  
roots grown  
into my toes  
from the source,  
ripe and bursting  
from my middle.  
You are sky and all the universe,  
the Hand that planted  
these stars,  
and I am but a sapling  
blown cold in earth's  
strong wind.  
But still, you caress  
each of my flowers  
like words bursting  
through air.

# All My Little Somethings

How often I dreamed  
of something  
made from nothing,  
waxed poetically  
about the “one day”  
that sat so far forward  
in my future.

But now “one day”  
is this day,  
and gathered round,  
all my little somethings  
I never made at all,  
but He did,  
graciously bestowing  
upon me things  
my hands were  
never fit to build.

# **My Heart Turned Stone**

Could You love me  
with me head bent down  
and my heart turned stone  
and knife set in my hand  
and point digging my chest  
and blood leaving my body  
and all thoughts making a mockery  
of the thing You always wanted me  
to be but set now to a life I only  
want to destroy?

## Of Everything You Are

How foolish to sit back  
with my new label  
and let my bones go  
cold as long as it's  
shiny and new.

If I truly understood  
You then I truly  
understand discomfort,  
and thorned crowns,  
and heaps of abuse,  
or maybe even still,  
the quiet moments  
of losing myself  
to the greater good  
of everything You are.

I understand being saved  
isn't nearly as nice  
as the thought of being  
in You.

## But Then My Heart Remembers

I've only wanted to walk  
with You, but my walking's  
no good.

How I trip, stumble,  
fall, bite the lip between  
my teeth.

I'm a red-faced toddler,  
wobbling my way  
around and over  
hardened earth.

But then my heart  
remembers something  
my brain can never handle:  
the soft, warm feel of  
Your loving hand.

# Wilder Than the Heart Within Us

How You give us  
a little piece of ourselves  
that we hold, so small  
and warm in pretty blankets.  
But as the time wears  
and our hair weakens  
and breath goes stale  
from the sure weight of our bones,  
these little pieces now overgrown  
and more than we can handle.  
Have they always been so sour  
and rotten to the touch?  
And that's when Your reminder  
pierces our heavy bones,  
and submission is no longer  
a game we sometimes play  
but the only way we can tame  
this little piece of ourselves  
that's wilder than the heart  
within us.

## All That Digging

We make it all beautiful  
and glittery,  
lipstick on a dead corpse  
because some of us  
have the stirring within  
our bones but some of us  
refuse to answer.

Why, I sometimes think,  
but I was like them once, too,  
a heart so grieved and chest  
so heavy from all that digging  
just so I could lie in my own  
pile of dirt.

## Dancing in Ink

There's no primitive  
jungle to evangelize  
in my kitchen sink,  
but to talk to all  
the others, you'd think  
I'm cashing in truth  
for dishes. But then You  
remind me that as much  
as I'm not them, they're not me,  
given to bouts of dancing in ink  
and staining paper with Your  
love that gave me paper  
and dishes in the first place.

## Respect for My Tears

They say sometimes  
You don't answer  
and stay silent.  
But when have You never  
answered me, sitting  
there in my quietly dark  
moments and refraining  
from saying a word  
out of respect for  
my tears?

## Weeping as He Works

Do you think He  
sits and watches  
and laughs  
as your heart  
is sheared,  
or is He  
working  
through  
the pain  
and pieces  
and parts  
of yourself  
you've only  
begun to know,  
weeping as He  
works, and thinking,  
“Ah yes, this part,”  
remembering what  
it was like to write  
your sorrow with  
His ink-stained hands?

# Float

How sick of me  
are we?  
Duplicitous,  
a dichotomy  
tearing my heart  
in two.  
I sometimes think  
You can understand  
it, but your feet  
walked sinless  
on the dirt, the earth.  
This ground.  
You take it all in,  
though,  
that breath held  
in your lungs  
until you finished  
it.  
And I suppose I hope  
for a single millisecond,  
You could see me here,  
head pressed neatly against  
wood,  
red marked into my forehead,  
the fingers of my soul  
attempting to loosen  
the knot and watch  
it all float  
away.

# Here in My House

Here I play  
inside my house  
the dreams I wish  
were true. And I  
snap so hard,  
fingers pressed,  
buttons submitting  
to a will that knows  
only filters brushed  
with colors I  
never knew existed.  
Here in my house  
I play like dreams  
are what built  
my home and  
the chips of my soul  
I suck on when it's hot.  
Dream-driven  
is what I'll hashtag  
it as my chin crooks  
upward in the air.  
I am okay  
and so are you  
and so is everything  
outside the windows  
I've painted black  
so the Lord can't see  
what pretty colors  
I've allowed to be  
that He would never

dare sweep away.

## Things Above

If I were to be  
born  
to myself,  
all the earthly  
things would prize  
up before my eyes  
and stack high,  
a beautiful pile  
that tastes of earth.  
and all the routes toward  
the inner core  
of this world,  
mapped on my tongue,  
a constant reminder  
that me, I am in control,  
one foot in front of the other.  
But here's the part  
that sparks  
as I walk sure-footed  
down the lane  
I never built with my own two hands:  
the earth cracks and then rips  
and dips down into the fiery  
middle, the lair where  
my own truth meets me  
face-to-face.  
I was not born to me  
but born to You  
and crafted in such a way  
that beauty was

the thing inside me  
but far too quickly  
rotten away like  
a naked core  
that has been bitten  
clean by dirty teeth  
and all who never  
really loved me.

My head, bowed now,  
eyes down and in the dirt,  
the dirt that I didn't make  
with my own two hands,  
I understand it, much clearer  
than when I had ever heard it before.

Here is death's door, how You died  
and overcame it,  
and here is me,  
the maker of nothing  
but my own misery.

You sweep through  
like wind and Spirit  
to shut it slowly, that sound,  
a creek that cracks right through  
my middle, and I'm delivered  
reborn to the outer edge  
of heaven,  
the taste in my mouth,  
washed and watered  
clean,  
my eyes set on things  
above.

## Three Days' Time

Sometimes,

death is a too-close  
whisper.

It buds like a beaten  
drum, soft in the beginning  
until it whirls deep beneath  
skin and pore.

And all the love lost to it,  
memory stinging the wound  
of those still breathing, faces  
shoved against the night's  
windowpane, eyes searching  
for puffs of breath from those  
we used to know.

But in three days' time,  
you removed that vacant  
loss beneath breast and bone  
and quieted the relentless  
beating in our brains.

You who loved Lazarus  
with an intensity  
and all the tears  
we were born  
to weep.

You braved the deep,  
the underbelly,  
the breeding ground  
of sin,  
and rose up  
against it,

pulling life  
from a deathly  
grip and conquering  
our hearts  
in the process.

## Me Plus Elohim

There's a whisper  
beneath my skull  
but above  
the brain,  
and it harbors  
every little  
pin of pain,  
pricking in  
and sticking  
out.

I used to think  
all love  
songs  
were the end  
of it.

That everything  
would tie up  
bow tight,  
because  
I belonged  
to Elohim,  
and He  
to me  
but then  
the dark  
comes.

Sometimes.  
And the shadow  
calls.  
Sometimes.

But every time,  
that whisper  
above brain,  
below bone,  
and I know,  
I am  
forever  
and always  
His.

## Prisms

Where are the rainbows  
in Scripture other  
than the one that broke  
sky high after the water  
took away all  
the people?

## Dichotomy

I am righteous of a kind  
of self  
that could set my feet,  
one foot to hell,  
the other aimed at heaven.  
A heavy heart ripped  
In two.

## Almost but Not Quite

She comes  
at me  
with white eyes  
and I almost  
see through them  
until the scriptural  
ink  
seeps  
my heart.

## Like Bees

Here we give  
two  
hands  
to the  
world but  
we've filled  
them full  
with screaming  
children  
and dirty floors  
and sticky mirrors  
and fresh cut grass  
and holding other  
hands old  
enough to know  
better.  
I'll go and  
talk about Jesus  
to someone  
who's sitting  
back against  
the flag pole  
once I find  
the pacifier  
to replace  
the one  
I clumsily  
dropped  
on the  
floor.

## Herdsman

Can you take a person  
inside your hands  
and break him open,  
rib by rib  
and know everything  
by eyeballing  
the bulging mass  
beneath his sternum?  
Can you know the lust  
turned “love” but always  
cloaked and hiding,  
shadowlike, not  
something to be eaten  
without testing, first?  
Can you say you lead  
God’s people without  
even knowing God’s  
people and how their evil  
leaves them pore by pore,  
ever searching your own?  
Remove the blinders,  
your fear,  
your love of money,  
your diminishing god,  
and keep eyes open  
to Jehovah who’s  
always thumbing  
the organ  
you try to hide  
with your hands.

## Can You Eat the Ashes?

Pigs and pearls  
and little girl dreams  
and the nothing  
more than what I'm not.  
And you,  
a  
sharp-mouthed  
word  
birthed by an  
empty  
belly.  
Your flint tongue  
set the  
grass on fire,  
but can you  
eat the  
ashes?

## You Hope for Light

But darkness  
is the cat that  
ate it,  
and God is  
the spirit  
who sent  
the cat.  
God is never  
surprised, not  
even when your  
eyes boil with  
hot tears and your  
mind roughly thumbs  
through all you've  
set on fire.

## Smashed Like Jars

Drunk and bloated  
on their own confidence  
and fighting against  
the beat of their own hearts.  
Smashed like jars,  
rivers of wine-  
colored blood.  
Souls dispersed  
and nevermore.  
Past meets present,  
and I watch it at my feet.

## Run Against Horses

Your own mind  
is the time bomb  
that releases you  
from His peace.  
It's not Him  
but your own  
hands that have you  
running against  
people, not horses,  
stuck to the dirt  
and grit and galloping  
like a lost lunatic  
in a world that's  
wrecked your name.

## Lost the Urge to Drink

There you were,  
deeply rooted  
in whatever  
lie shrunk your heart,  
branches clawing  
at a sky who  
wouldn't save  
you.  
And do you know how  
many times  
I look in the mirror,  
feel the skin,  
dig deep  
nail by nail,  
to find where  
my own roots  
have knotted  
and lost the  
urge to  
drink?

## Wash the Evil from Your Hearts

The death silence  
is the one thing  
you'd remember  
if you were there.  
But you are not.  
Your long hair,  
unwashed  
and the party  
clothes stored away.  
Because nobody  
is left to celebrate  
the day evil  
eats the heart.

# The Disaster is Coming

My mouth  
is spoken  
but hollow  
and torn  
demonic  
with evil  
things  
and thoughts  
and peeled  
inside, the  
tongue and  
tissue,  
flaked away  
like skin dying  
in the sun.  
Sin is sometimes  
the only thing  
I eat, less  
calories, slim waist,  
and I take  
that quick image  
with my eyes  
like it's the only  
picture worth  
seeing.  
Grant me  
freedom,  
dead serpents,  
clean air,  
a fiery heart.

Because no  
good deed goes  
unpunished.  
Let me know  
the punishment,  
like I know  
the hard parts  
of the dark.

## And All the People Say Amen

Who am I to you  
and you to me  
that I'm no longer  
dripped in sweet  
red wine  
or the vice that stings  
or the voice that  
cords around  
my long white  
neck but drip  
dry of everything  
I've ever loved  
to only fill that void  
with  
someone  
like  
You?

## Who Lacks Bread

Forever  
no bread  
and a heart  
like stone  
and two hands  
like a mother's  
but a mouth  
devoid  
of love.  
All these things  
make up  
my face  
and hair  
and hands.  
And all  
these things  
can eat the  
edges and innards  
of a weary soul  
unless that soul  
seeks  
You.

# Evil Teeth

They are so white  
and so pretty  
and fit perfectly  
within two sets  
of gums.

They're rooted  
just so,  
and when the people  
see them, they rejoice.

But here our little hearts  
weep and wail  
because truth  
is a bitter sword  
between our own  
teeth.

Not evil,  
but not pretty either,  
biting down on  
cold steel  
and tasting  
the blood of  
our martyred  
hearts.

# The Night Man

I had a dream  
about the other  
you,  
the good one,  
the one that loves  
to hear me breathe  
and asks me how my day  
was.

I can't help it, though,  
to think  
of the half-shadow  
of the sometimes man,  
of his arms wrapping  
me up into himself  
until everything stings  
of midnight.

It's the darkness  
that comes calling,  
that will devour us all,  
but in the other side of  
you,  
the not so bright one,  
I hold my breath  
as if drowning  
because it sometimes  
feels like I am.

But when my eyes open,  
that's the best part of it  
all.

To see the starburst surge

against black felt.

To desire utter nothingness  
only to be introduced  
to light.

## Bad Adam

What is it for man  
to tear apart  
the flesh  
from the core  
until all there  
is left is an undesirable  
longing to once again  
be ruby red  
and glossed all over,  
more lost than loss  
at the power of your own  
hand than  
his?

## Nero's Candle

I couldn't be  
brighter  
if Nero dipped  
me in wax  
and lit me  
in the green  
of his garden,  
a human torch  
aglow,  
hair and skin  
and heart  
melting and sparking  
meant to snuff  
me out,  
but only  
steering eyes  
to the force  
of my  
fire.

## Get Your Free Books!

*Ericka Clay*

ERICKACLAY.COM

1

Join my mailing list at [erickaclay.com](http://erickaclay.com)<sup>2</sup> to receive my emails in your inbox and download my free books and resources. There's no charge and no obligation.

---

1. <http://erickaclay.com/>
2. <http://erickaclay.com>



