



ERICKA CLAY

# UNANSWERED

LAMENTS IN VERSE



*Unanswered: Laments in Verse*

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### *Unanswered: Laments in Verse*

I remember reading a novel (based on real events) about women who used to be paid to be mourners in our country, how this tradition had come over from the “old country” and how it was almost a point of pride to wail and shriek for pay.

But what about doing it for free? What about truly feeling those feelings of wrath and sadness and abandonment and confusion and fear? When did we ever start thinking we could stuff them away and hide them where God could never find them?

God’s Word has laid out the blueprint for emotional healing in the art-form of lament. It’s a soulful wailing in devastation and despair, the conjuring of all we can’t control.

We can only heal what we acknowledge. We can only let the Lord take dominion over what we willingly submit to Him. And we can submit through the groans of our souls.

So maybe it’s worth not rushing what hurts, and instead, leaning on the One who’s suffered everything...us included.

*This is a small collection of my own laments written during the time of Lent. I’ve titled this collection “Unanswered,” not because God doesn’t answer our prayers but because, sometimes, He allows us to sort out the “why” of it all in the stillness as He continues to make all things new.*

## The Webs

---

Who is it who lives  
cob-webbed  
in her head  
when all the world  
can see her sleek  
and shining,  
fractured,  
and glimmering  
against  
the cold  
harsh world  
inside  
and out?  
Pray, take Your  
Hand, hide the cold,  
warm the glass,  
melt her heart  
in a world  
that keeps  
worldly  
even as  
her knee  
and head  
bow.  
Even as  
she plucks  
away  
the webs.

# Unanswered

---

Is it something  
I did or  
didn't do  
or thought  
or left  
bereft  
and stranded  
or maybe  
the reason  
is "just is."  
And how Job-like  
for me to question  
What shouldn't  
be answered.  
Potter and clay  
and all that,  
but really,  
what good  
would the answer  
do me  
anyhow?

## Your Pain

---

The hurt I feel  
is Your hurt,  
a tiny microcosm,  
a “pup cup” if you will  
That I can lap up  
and eat within  
seconds when Your  
table is set  
with eons of pain,  
wound and set forth  
within our organic  
bodies,  
our shameful minds,  
our dirty hearts.  
And what a love,  
a love like that –  
enduring all  
the things I  
think I know  
but never will.

## The Good You Are

---

Hot,  
searing pain,  
flipped over—  
cool side  
of my pillow,  
eyes shut and  
asleep before  
I can even  
register  
the pain  
I am,  
the pain  
I caused,  
the  
Good  
You  
are.

## How Little

---

When  
Oh, Lord?  
Is that any better  
to ask than the why?  
It's been too many hours, days  
impossible winking  
moments  
like a cadet  
walking out  
his march,  
straight-faced  
against  
the man  
who never  
forgets,  
never surrenders,  
never let's go.  
It's all I ever wanted  
for me,  
for her,  
for him,  
to let go  
and let You,  
to leap  
feet first,  
heart forward  
into the peace  
that surpasses  
all my understanding.  
Which is good,

for how little  
I understand.

## Do You Remember?

---

Do you remember  
when you remembered  
all the things  
and knew better  
and told your  
mother how jealous  
she must be of you,  
because look at you—  
How amazing  
and stunning  
you are like  
a star that burns  
and never  
burns out,  
but don't  
travel  
too close,  
you fools,  
for don't  
you already  
hear  
your skin  
sizzling?  
Do you remember  
when your sins  
were your sins  
but maybe  
something better?  
Like a banner  
You wore,

scarlet  
and red,  
the letter  
“S” –  
pridefully  
adorned  
and thankful  
to be “wise”  
and “adult”  
like the rest  
of the world?  
Do you remember  
giving birth  
freed from God’s  
hand because  
you left your hand  
opened,  
and now enter  
stage left:  
the carbon  
copy of you—  
like watching  
hope  
unfulfilled,  
a funhouse image  
of all you were  
And sometimes,  
have a hard time letting  
go?  
Do you remember  
that He died  
for this too?

This moment  
in time that you  
cannot control  
nor ever will  
but that His blood  
covers—all your  
indiscretions,  
hers, too,  
and you will  
live again  
to see another  
day?

## Heart-Like

---

My heart  
is only  
heart-like  
to remind  
your heart  
of what  
it's like  
to beat,  
unpossessed,  
devoid  
of pride,  
capable  
of love  
that is  
the action  
verb  
we  
let lay  
a  
little  
too  
passive  
sometimes.

## Box of Perfection

---

I lived housed in my box  
of perfection,  
seeking only glimpses  
out the window  
when ready for air.  
It's crumpled now,  
worn away cardboard,  
soaked with rain and sun,  
dappled with my sweat  
and swaying with the weight  
of my burdens,  
Then this happens, the thing  
I've worked so hard for,  
toiled with my own  
two hands when toiling  
has never been part  
of my vocabulary.  
I reassess who am I now,  
where am I going,  
what does this mean,  
and why have I lived  
for so long inside  
something less  
than suitable to shield  
the rain, the sun.

## Answered Prayers

---

They say things  
remained unanswered  
but really, it's all  
in the eye—  
looking back  
behind  
my shoulder,  
leaving  
in my wake  
all the  
things  
I longed  
to hold  
but was  
never  
made  
to touch.

## Only a Moment

---

I remember sunburnt  
skin and the smell  
of water  
warming in the  
sun and everyone  
laughing and how  
loud it was,  
and he, sometimes,  
the loudest.  
The food piled  
high, Italian  
pasta salad  
and burgers  
and hot dogs  
and happiness—  
full bellies,  
full hearts.  
And he  
and your  
dad playing  
basketball  
while we  
dripped  
wet then dry  
on the front  
stoop.  
And then back  
in the pool,  
he ragging on  
his sister

and she, wading  
in the water  
with her pug,  
laughing and  
even louder  
than him.

And his mother  
there,  
a woman who  
already knew  
heartbreak in the man  
she once loved,  
your uncle,  
your mother's brother,  
the protector,  
now gone so many years.

And seeing him again  
in my mind's eye,  
I see us, forever  
as we were  
and should be,  
but aren't  
anymore.

How when you're  
young,  
a memory is  
only a moment,  
one that will  
never stop  
burning  
even  
when

the people  
who make  
them  
eventually  
do.

## Little Birds

---

Like little birds  
peck and bicker,  
Your children  
intent  
on blinding  
the eyes of  
truth,  
and  
each  
other.  
If only  
we could  
drink from  
Your well  
of Grace  
and  
remember  
we all  
take  
flight.

## Good Things Spring Forth

---

I want to be the  
Potter,  
the one to shape  
and form you,  
not the bad  
decisions  
you make  
or the men  
who will let  
you down.  
And if I go  
one way,  
will you end  
up another,  
like some  
sort of trick  
I can never  
figure out?  
But a friend  
reminded me  
of God's will,  
stronger than  
yours  
or mine,  
And how  
good things  
spring  
forth from  
the ashes  
He uses

to form  
us  
anew.

## Redeemed

---

I wish I could protect you from the dark  
darkness  
of this ever-evolving black  
blackness  
that's reaching out and into the  
beautiful  
creatures God has painstakingly  
made.

He is not without form or detail and  
immeasurable  
amounts of patience and kindness and  
graciousness  
for my lack of understanding and wayward  
heart.

But just know, He is much higher than me, mere  
mortal,  
loping by and by through His  
magnificent  
world, turned dark with  
darkness  
and black with  
blackness  
and yet? Still  
beautiful  
But most importantly,  
redeemed.

How everything is  
of You  
if not  
for You,  
and how beautiful  
the look of a lost  
face, turned  
just a hair,  
as the bricks  
fall out beneath  
her  
and she strains  
towards the only  
thing worthy  
to carry her  
home.

# Amen

---

There here now  
is not the always  
will be,  
something  
that can get  
lost and buried  
in my  
soil and sweat,  
but you so kindly  
turn my eyes  
to the forever  
and ever,  
and all I can  
think to say  
is  
Amen.

## Black Waterfall

---

Lost in sin,  
in darkness,  
my own  
and others'  
and extensions  
of me,  
cascading down,  
black waterfall,  
Your hand reaching  
in,  
the only One  
I see.

## Not Me but You

---

It's not about me  
but You  
and what a human  
thing  
to see myself  
as my own  
maker  
when I don't  
even have  
the words  
to say I'm  
sorry.

## Now and Forever

---

The scream and silence  
of my previous pain  
weaves and wavers  
in this current one,  
an opened book,  
cascading pages,  
set back to the  
beginning of the story  
when my heart  
wasn't for You,  
but You still  
held my grief  
anyway.

Maybe like that previous  
pain, this one will heal  
over and through  
and become only  
the soft whisper  
that dances amidst  
all You'll bear for  
me in the now  
and forever,  
and ever  
amen.

## The Firmest Foundation

---

My footing is  
free-falled  
in this ill-gotten  
world.

Nowhere to step  
but the rocky face  
of past mistakes,  
the hardened path  
of hardened hearts,  
and the regrettable  
void at the edge  
of it all.

But how lightly  
You lift me,  
up,  
up,  
up,  
and away,  
until all crumbles  
to ash,  
Your breath  
blowing it  
clear,  
and how you set  
me back down  
on the firmest  
foundation,  
into Your arms,  
faced always  
forward.

## Turned to Gold

---

Keep it simple,  
Stupid,  
but what about  
holy  
and pure  
and all the things  
I'm unable to  
do with these  
sullied human hands?  
May my face know You,  
Your face shine upon  
Me and singe through  
my faulty offerings,  
refining through fire,  
my gift  
turned to  
gold.

## Your Other World

---

How sweet,  
lament—  
a satisfying  
sigh  
like from  
the lips  
of an animal,  
stalked then wounded,  
life leaving it,  
but also leaving  
with life,  
not into a  
netherworld,  
But Your  
other world,  
mirrored in  
the once-goodness  
of all we once had,  
like a fawn in dewed  
grass,  
waiting for what's  
next.

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