CREATIVE ARTS: POEM

Let the grief wash off you

Ria George

When the news comes, in splutters and waves, let it swallow you
And when you're alone, let the tap open and the tub fill with your tears
Peel back your dead skin and wade into the tub
Slowly at first, a foot at a time
Immerse yourself in the warmth, in its embrace
Let yourself wallow in the brine
Let the water fall between your fingers and seep through your hair
Let the grief wash off you.

Sit there until you start to raisin.

When you feel ready, peel back the oceans and dry yourself off
Let the light in the room fall warm upon your skin
And when you're done, rub lotion on the parts of you that still need healing
Run your fingers through your hair and slip into silk
Perfume your collarbones and your wrists
Let the fragrance waft around you like a new breath
Let these things happen in this very order
Let the grief wash off you.

About the author

Ria is a fifth-year medical student at The University of Auckland, currently based in the Waikato/Lakes District Health Board regions.

Conflicts of Interest

Ria is a student reviewer for the New Zealand Medical Student Journal (NZMSJ). This creative arts competition entry underwent the double-blinded peer review process applied to all entries submitted to the NZMSJ, and was judged to be one of the two winners of the competition.

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