CREATIVE SPACE

Silent storm

GOURISANKAR NANDAKUMAR

The calendar on the wall is not just a measure of days,
It is a map of warnings.
I mark the weeks in red,
Bracing for the tide that pulls the ground from under me.

The monitor shows a landscape of grey,
Grainy shadows that the doctor calls "clear."
"There is nothing here," he says, "Everything looks normal."
The wand moving over the surface, smooth and blind.
And I am left holding a heavy, invisible truth,
Wondering why my own anatomy is gaslighting me.

How do I explain the pulling?
It is not a sharp cut, not something clean you can stitch.
It is a low, heavy tether hooked behind the hipbone,
Like a sewing needle lost in deep water,
Catching on the fabric of things inside.
Some days, it is cement drying in the pelvis,
Turning movement into a negotiation.

They tell me it is just the weather of being a woman,
A monthly storm I should learn to weather.
"Take a hot bath," they suggest. "Relax." "Maybe it's stress."
As if this pain were a mood I could breathe away,
And not a rusted wire tightening
Around the life I am trying to live.

I count the years in cancelled plans,
In friends who stopped calling because I am "always tired."
The bathroom floor knows me better than they do –
The cold tile against the cheek,
The porcelain offering the only cool place
In a body running a fever of inflammation.

I look in the mirror and see the swelling,
A stomach distinct and tender,
Holding space for a phantom that has no name.
It is a thief, this thing. It steals the energy from the morning,
It casts a shadow over the question of "someday" and "children,"
A silent question mark hovering in the dark.

And yet, it is not a weakness.
It is a body building walls where none should be,
Weaving scars in the silence.
I am carrying a house that is slowly locking its doors,
Fighting a war that leaves no shrapnel,
No bruises to show the jury.

But I get up. I wash the face that bears the strain,
I dress the pain in silence, and walk out into the light.

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