

**T**HE WORDS OF ANATIYA, daughter of Avigayil, one of the handmaids at the temple at Anatot in the territory of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup>She fell deeply in love with Jeremiah in her thirteenth year. <sup>3</sup>Her body was so faint with love for Jeremiah that her soul caught in her throat and made her mute for the remainder of her days. <sup>4</sup>In the quietude of her love, she penned the songs of her heart. <sup>5</sup>She shadowed Jeremiah all of his days like a faint aroma of meadow, like a distant memory of lilies abloom in the valley of Sharon. <sup>6</sup>A child-spook, a brittle tea-leaf, she hid within her a passion for the prophet Jeremiah that was silver-trumpet-loud.

<sup>7</sup>The moment I saw you I knew:

That I had been destined for you when my soul was yet on high;  
before I was a swell in my mother's belly, I was consecrated  
to be the one to love you as a desert flower loves a drop of dew.

<sup>8</sup>I saw you  
surrounded with God  
and I fell upon my face  
and praised God, and blessed you,  
<sup>9</sup>and I knew that surely I would die  
should I lift my eyes and see  
the Holy One face to face,  
<sup>10</sup>but I heard your brave little voice  
as a clear glass bell ring out:  
"Ah, Lord God,  
I don't know how to speak!"

<sup>11</sup>I lifted my eyes,  
I could not help myself!

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Your voice stirred me so.

<sup>12</sup>I looked up and saw you  
standing at God's very core,  
and you were not consumed!

<sup>13</sup>No, you radiated like a beacon  
in a pure star-dewy mist,  
your skin was translucent,  
luminous,  
a veil of sunlight over  
a sky-blue soul.

<sup>14</sup>Your eyes were two black moons  
sailing through your open face,  
Your skin gleamed like a polished marble floor.

<sup>15</sup>Your ears were small  
as a newborn's open palms,  
snatching at God's words,  
which filled the air like thin bubbles.

<sup>16</sup>You dazzled me.

I opened my mouth to cry out to you,  
and the God that surrounded you streamed into my throat, swelling  
my soul.

<sup>17</sup>I thought I might die, but I lost my voice instead of my life

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>18</sup>When God put out a hand and touched your mouth,  
God put out another hand,  
and touched the tip of a finger to my lips,  
whispering, "Shhhh." <sup>19</sup>I never spoke again.  
But I would gladly give my tongue, Jeremiah,  
if I might be your life companion,  
that I might be your quiet rose  
among the damsels of the land.

<sup>20</sup>I tucked almond blossoms into my hair  
and scratched your name with a twig under my thigh,  
over and over until it scarred,  
that my body might never forget whilst she slept  
the one whom my soul loves.

<sup>21</sup>I set my pot on the fire  
and the steam curled away  
from the heat in my fingers.

<sup>22</sup>My fingers could have been fire-sticks.  
They dripped thick myrrh as candles running wax,  
longing, forgive me, to touch.

<sup>23</sup>I was quick to stir tea  
and warm up the rocks that I might bake cakes for you.

<sup>24</sup>I took three measures of flour and hastily kneaded.

<sup>25</sup>My fingers spread outward over the dough,  
wings of a white dove a-flutter.

<sup>26</sup>I baked you honey cakes with crumbled mint  
and I left them by your door every morning,  
and so my fingers touch you

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>27</sup>At night I lay awake on my couch.  
This love threw me sandward into a swoon  
countless times throughout the day  
and I began to feel myself pale and unearthly.

<sup>28</sup>I wondered whether I was human at all,  
or whether—God forgive me one untamed thought!—  
perhaps I myself was an angel,  
muted so as not to distract from my singular mission:

<sup>29</sup>to sustain my love with cakes  
and protect the embers of his precious light.

<sup>30</sup>Or perhaps I am just sick with love  
and this fever keeps my feet just over this land  
so that I hover like a gold-laced cloud,  
dizzy and tearful,

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clinging for my dear life  
to a mountaintop.

<sup>3</sup>I might kiss you never,  
but if I could save you but once,  
if I could be there one time  
to throw my body before a poisoned dart,  
<sup>3</sup>if I could be there one time only  
to eat up your depression  
and die of it in your place,  
it would be sweeter to my soul than a kiss.  
No treasure could match it

~WROTE ANATIYA.

#### 2

Even as a youth,  
before the flower of my maidenhood had bloomed,  
I have been devoted to you; your secret bride  
whom you did not know.

<sup>2</sup>When my desire pierced me  
like a wreath of thorns around my head,  
and when the pain was sharp behind my eyes,  
I escaped into the wilderness  
and filled my arms with nature's harvest.  
<sup>3</sup>I stretched out in beds of blossoms  
until my skin was pressed with petals.  
<sup>4</sup>I tromped barefooted, plowing the soil with my toes.  
<sup>5</sup>At the height of my sickness for you, Jeremiah,  
I threw my arms around a sturdy tree  
and my legs over a stubby branch,  
and, <sup>6</sup>O God! Let my piety remain intact!  
<sup>7</sup>I assure you no man has known me, my dear,  
but that tree did break my virgin seal.  
I kissed its wooden heart

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>8</sup>My father did leave when I was a child.  
 He had chewed on my mother's heart,  
 sucked it like a cluster of purple grapes through his teeth,  
 but she still eked out some love for me.

<sup>9</sup>Never did I ask her "Where is my father?"  
<sup>10</sup>What need had I of frightful eyes and a beard of thorns?  
<sup>11</sup>Purple cloth has the high price of gold  
 yet my mother was clothed in purple for free,  
 like swollen leeches under her skin.  
 She was my mother-queen.

<sup>12</sup>He abandoned us  
 and at five I did the work of a bondsman,  
 bearing bundles on my shoulders like a pack mule,  
 teetering and scraping along the corners of the farmers' fields.  
<sup>13</sup>My sapling-thighs strained like an ox,  
 rolling a stone wheel to grind that wheat into flour.  
<sup>14</sup>My mother made loaves to sell to merchants.

<sup>15</sup>She wept over my neck  
 which was too young and might break  
 under the weighty water jugs  
 I bore home atop my head.  
<sup>16</sup>My neck was lovely and slender as a bride's wrist  
 peeking out from under ceremonial wraps.

<sup>17</sup>I grew cedar-strong and sun-callused,  
 black as the tents of Kedar,  
 industrious as an insect dragging twice its weight  
 with its wispy baby-hair legs.

<sup>18</sup>On my mat I dreamt toil  
 so that my sleep was sore and physical,  
 little less than the days.  
<sup>19</sup>I heard the buzz of heat and the silence loud

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and the sun struck me dizzy  
so that, I am ashamed O Lord!  
<sup>20</sup>I sometimes stole a suck from a she-goat's teat  
when her shepherd looked away.  
<sup>21</sup>The iniquity of a child, dear Lord,  
if I am guilty, I stand accused

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>22</sup>I did find my mother  
the day she died.  
<sup>23</sup>I found my fount of living waters  
seeping redly into Sheol.  
<sup>24</sup>I chipped the dough-flakes from her hands  
and tucked poppies under her low breasts,  
two broken cisterns  
that cannot even hold water.  
<sup>25</sup>I wept.  
I dragged her on her mat with my two hands,  
walking backwards, my bird-back hunched,  
my cries raised up.  
<sup>26</sup>I scuffled her to the grave I dug,  
like a little ant dragging a fragment of honeycomb  
six times its weight, clenched in pinching jaw,  
jerking it under the ground.  
<sup>27</sup>My head was bare.

I sat between heaven and death,  
an avalanche of hurt ran down my chest,  
tears, and the tremble of heartbreak.  
<sup>28</sup>Good-bye my queen,  
my earthly sovereign.  
Heaven help me little me,  
I was utterly dazed

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>29</sup>I must have done a twofold wrong  
to have driven away my father  
and lost my mother's spirit.

<sup>30</sup>Forgive me, O Heaven,  
my presence is no salve,  
my touch no healing balm.

<sup>31</sup>But know, Lord, as much  
as this damaged vessel can bear,  
with its fissures and leaks,  
that awe for You is in me!  
Awe for You is in me!

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>32</sup>God speaks to you, Jeremiah,  
with hot-iron words God strikes you.  
<sup>33</sup>God brands you with the Most High disappointment.  
God tears a fissure in the firmament  
and lets loose the skies' ocean upon your soul.

<sup>34</sup>Ocean-tossed boy,  
I am your Constant.

<sup>35</sup>Here, ducked down and timorous,  
here-ever, here-after  
a moon-pebble caught in your small orbit  
twining forever here,  
after there are no words left  
falling in tumult from the Throne  
and God turns away to tend  
an underground spring in the desert,  
here am I still constant  
while age picks at me with tiny fingers.  
I fear not. <sup>36</sup>Love is strong as death.

<sup>37</sup>My desire rolls over me and flattens my bones.

<sup>38</sup>A frosty hand grabs hold of my heart

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and you appear to me as a warm shaft of light.  
I am sick! I am sick for you, prophet!  
<sup>39</sup>I run to a high hill while tears slant from my eyes,  
I might leap, I just might!  
<sup>40</sup>I scramble upward to the hilltop.  
This lust is too base, too alien,  
it wants to bury me young!  
<sup>41</sup>I must climb straight above it.  
At the top my throat is closing.  
<sup>42</sup>My fingertips are swollen and pulsing.  
<sup>43</sup>O Lord, how you have fashioned restlessness in this young girl!  
<sup>44</sup>It is no use.  
I wrap my legs around a verdant tree  
like well-watered vines.  
Its branches enfold my back lightly.  
A young leafy shoot reaches out.  
<sup>45</sup>My arms woven amidst its branches,  
my hands grasping tight,  
I lifted myself up,  
(O forgive me Blessed Watcher!)  
<sup>46</sup>my mouth did open  
and I pressed my dry tongue to the bark  
and I loved and I said  
to the tree, <sup>47</sup>“you are my lover.”  
And I cried for salvation  
and the tree, it shook with the weight of me.

<sup>48</sup>I curled up, dear Lord, and I cried until dawn.  
My love has driven me mad.  
I call You to save me, to account for my soul.  
<sup>49</sup>Do not stone me for my thirst!  
Do not drop Your fists of hail upon me!  
<sup>50</sup>Do not turn Your back on me, O Lord!  
<sup>51</sup>I vow that no man will know me,  
no man will know me, but the trees,



do forgive this palest of iniquities,  
the desert trees will bear marks of my teeth

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>52</sup>You are sitting on a flat stone in the valley  
listening to the shining words of the Lord.  
<sup>53</sup>They come to you strung together in furious poetry.  
I stand by and gather handfuls of spilt syllables  
which roll away like forgotten jewels,  
round and smooth over the white face of sand.  
<sup>54</sup>I wear them around my neck.

<sup>55</sup>Your hair is raven black, slick as feathers,  
and the afternoon sunlight is reflected in your locks  
as a glowing ring of amber light  
that cascades gently over your shoulders.  
<sup>56</sup>Your skin is a sheen over a shadow,  
a bright over a dark.  
<sup>57</sup>Should the dark side of the moon  
surface with the bright, this would be your pallor.  
<sup>58</sup>Your eyes are the first day of Creation.  
In them, God separated the light from the darkness.  
<sup>59</sup>God called the light "Eye,"  
and the darkness God called "Iris."  
<sup>60</sup>Your lips are the deepening horizon.  
<sup>61</sup>The blue veins on your wrists  
are a perfect map of the rivers of Eden.  
Here is Pishon and her sister Gihon,  
winding up the length of your arm, side by side.  
<sup>62</sup>And here branches Tigris and here branches Euphrates,  
and here your lifeblood courses  
from your upturned hand, a tiny Eden,  
from hand to head, from head to hand,  
and heart, and love,  
<sup>63</sup>if I could kiss you now

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just one place, it would be there,  
upon your delicate palm.  
<sup>64</sup>And then upon your neck and inside your setting-sun mouth,  
for no, I could never kiss you just one place my love.  
I could kiss you never,  
but never just once

~WROTE ANATIYA.

3

If I were your wife I would hide my blush behind a veil of sky. I'd need no embroidered garment, no band of gold. <sup>2</sup>And if you should look at my fingers and ask, "My love, with what shall I adorn these hands, these almond blossoms?" <sup>3</sup>(for so I imagine your speaking), then I would say, <sup>4</sup>"Carve for me your third eye, the one that shows you visions of the Lord, genuine from under your brow, and I shall wear it upon my finger. It is the gem with the most excellent clarity."

<sup>5</sup>But fantasy is for the unworthy.  
You must know that I am a desert nymph,  
whoring with the foliage.  
<sup>6</sup>The trees straighten up  
in reverence to me.  
<sup>7</sup>How I myself despise.  
It is because of me that they become  
brittle and chapped, those blameless sprouts.  
<sup>8</sup>When no cloud offers respite,  
and no rain quenches their wooden hearts,  
it is because I have laid a curse upon them,  
tainted their sap with my own.  
<sup>9</sup>Hard-working ants march up to the spot  
to investigate the sweet mingling  
of girl-child and resin.  
<sup>10</sup>Dear Father, water your garden!  
Do not mind me as I lie among the sticks.

<sup>11</sup>Jeremiah is the companion of my youth,  
and I am only his shadow's shadow.

<sup>12</sup>Do not withhold the Heaven's late showers  
on account of such a forgotten dream,  
such a forgettable dreamer as me.

<sup>13</sup>Josiah was eight years old when he became king, nearly twenty years before my birth. <sup>14</sup>I imagine him then, as little and lean as I today, nestling himself into that wide golden throne. <sup>15</sup>Sweet Josiah, noble and pure, love of your mother, Jedidah daughter of Adaiah descendent of David. She was named for the psalmist's own son. <sup>16</sup>Your father sacrificed unclean animals to chipped idols, pounded his breast in painted temples. <sup>17</sup>You were old enough to remember when your father's own courtiers murdered him and the people of the land did then massacre them. <sup>18</sup>With the bloodied hands and thirsty eyes of wolves, they lifted you upon the chair. <sup>19</sup>A people awaited your rulership, while you sadly consented to overcome your years. <sup>20</sup>A shepherd from a little lamb was forged. O, your eight years must have seemed to you as eight branches of Temple light, filled with oil and set on fire! ~wrote Anatiya.

<sup>21</sup>You found a companion in Shaphan the scribe. He delivered you a message from on high. <sup>22</sup>He proclaimed: "I have found a scroll of the Teaching in the House of the Lord!" <sup>23</sup>And Shaphan read to you as Jedidah did when your childhood was still a gift. <sup>24</sup>He read, "These are the words that Moses addressed to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan." <sup>25</sup>You did not stir, you barely blinked all the while he read, all through the night by a dim oil lamp. Your heart leapt when he read "O happy Israel!" and a moment later you wept when he read, "He buried him." <sup>26</sup>As he ended the scroll, in that tiny moment, the Lord showed the whole land to you. <sup>27</sup>It was cringing and crying to you. You tore your garment, wept and stood. <sup>28</sup>You trusted no man at that time, and so you sought the wisdom of a woman, the prophetess Hulda. <sup>29</sup>Her husband was the keeper of the wardrobe, and he was knowledgeable in robing. But she was knowledgeable in disrobing. <sup>30</sup>She knew to peel away the thick husks and see to the clear kernel of truth within. She showed you the word of the Lord ~wrote Anatiya.

<sup>31</sup>The Lord set you ablaze with anger toward those other altars. <sup>32</sup>There was a fraction of Moses within you when you flared up against each and every wild golden calf. <sup>33</sup>You hated the parade which tore with

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glitter-teeth at your carefully sown gardens, galloping through your royal orchards where the voice of God was known to stroll. <sup>34</sup>There was a fraction of Noah within you when you invited the waters to purge the land. <sup>35</sup>You ground the bones of the priests and burned them on their altars. <sup>36</sup>You hewed down the incense stands and the shrines of the gates, turned Ashera and Ashtoreth into dust, demolished the Baals and the cubicles of male prostitutes. <sup>37</sup>You burned the chariots of the sun and froze the fires of Molech, so that no child should be tossed into that raging pit. <sup>38</sup>You melted molten images into precious rivulets until the land bled silver, copper, and fine gold.

<sup>39</sup>O beautiful Josiah, you turned to the Lord with all of your heart and soul and might. <sup>40</sup>The Lord swore that no disaster should befall whilst your good eyes still shine. But it has been said that you will be slain before your time, plucked early from your place so that you should not see God's wrath. <sup>41</sup>But I shall see it, and I shall live it. O protect our righteous King Josiah that the day may not come! <sup>42</sup>Hulda did not tell you all that she saw, Josiah. <sup>43</sup>She knew your end and hid the words, "Beware the river Euphrates!" ~wrote Anatiya.

<sup>44</sup>The icy moon removed her hood,  
thinking that she was alone. So small are we  
to her that she mistakes us for empty space.

<sup>45</sup>You turn back the cover while you sleep  
and I see your shoulder, round and bare,  
luminous as the water's moon-reflections.

<sup>46</sup>So unlike any man, Jeremiah,  
you are dust of stars, ashes of the silvery moon.

<sup>47</sup>I have resolved to adopt you as my life,  
and I offer you my presence  
which shies away in love.

<sup>48</sup>I offer you my faint, vaporous presence,  
that you might ever-suspect  
you are fiercely loved.

<sup>49</sup>I tumble to you, an uprooted weed,

over undulating hills.  
<sup>50</sup>Let us lie down in our weariness  
and let my breath be a cover to you,  
warm and sweet as a field  
where you dream of sweeping trees  
and silence.

4

Return your soul, O prophet

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>2</sup>Return your soul  
from its celestial academy  
where angels read praises  
by the light she emits.  
<sup>3</sup>Return your soul,  
restless sleeper,  
from its wandering on high.  
<sup>4</sup>At night our bodies peek into the kingdom of death.  
<sup>5</sup>Return your soul, O prophet,  
let day not break without your return,  
that nations might bless themselves by you,  
that holiness might not flee our realm.

<sup>6</sup>I adjure you men of Judah and Jerusalem, do not scorn me!  
I am powerless at the end of desire's short leash.

<sup>7</sup>Boars snuff for truffles in the dust.  
Children scuffle for coins in the sand.  
<sup>8</sup>Treasure hunters and grave robbers  
tunnel a labyrinth through Sheol.  
<sup>9</sup>All eyes comb the footpath for  
a gem, a creeping herb, an antler for luck.  
<sup>10</sup>Last night as I lay upon my mat,

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my soul sought to find the one I love.

<sup>11</sup>I walked through a damp garden  
and a glisten caught my eye.

<sup>12</sup>A drop of star, a tiger's tooth,  
I crouched down to pick it up.

<sup>13</sup>In my hand it was tiny and soft  
like a baby's earlobe, and I  
loved it like a baby.

<sup>14</sup>It was the foreskin of an eight-day-old prophet.  
I'd trade a truffle, a coin, a treasure  
to any finder's keeper for the piece of you  
their flint-stone sheared away.

<sup>15</sup>This is the key to your covenant with Heaven,  
I held it aloft to the moon.

<sup>16</sup>Last night as I lay upon my mat  
I found the ghost of your missing piece  
and I put it into my mouth.  
I chewed it delicately and  
swallowed it down.

<sup>17</sup>I woke with the taste of apples.  
Jeremiah, I dream you  
and I wake in a spin.

<sup>18</sup>Citizens of Judah and Jerusalem,  
cup your one heart like two hands  
under a clear fountain.

<sup>19</sup>Lift your heart to your lips  
and tip your palms, drink deep.  
Reshape yourselves a vessel.

<sup>20</sup>Jeremiah's soul is an aviary  
that houses every broken wing in Israel.

<sup>21</sup>Jeremiah's heart is an atrium  
in which flutters a nightmare  
of chirping and squawking,  
God's mad accounting.

<sup>22</sup>Perched upon an olive shoot,  
one mournful bird surveys it all.

<sup>23</sup>She whistles his soul sharp  
as a hot blade of grass.

<sup>24</sup>His eyes are two nets  
sweeping the world's floor  
and storing its lost inhabitants  
in vaulted memory banks.

<sup>25</sup>My love stations a sign  
with steepled letters, scrawled urgent  
and with the slant of hard rain.

<sup>26</sup>The sweat of his thin brow  
reflects a fevered blue flame  
as he drives the post, with finality,  
into the roadside as into Sisera's temple:  
To Zion take refuge! Do not delay!

<sup>27</sup>Not a one can read, but I.  
I studied the hidden books of Anatot

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>28</sup>The tongue of the prophet strums sentences  
the way the hand of the harpist strums chords.

<sup>29</sup>A heat rises to your cheeks.  
In one fist you capture the ferocity of Nimrod,  
in the other, the defiance of Abraham when you rail:

<sup>30</sup>“Ah mighty Heavens, how You deceive this people,  
embracing them in Your right  
with sword blazing in Your left!”

<sup>31</sup>The highest Heavens are shocked  
by the thunder of this pale prophet,  
which comes in full blast.  
Crashing seven firmaments,

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your charge unfurls like a flame against them.

<sup>32</sup>Tufts of cloud bandage the wound,

still I see Heaven wink an almost human tear.

<sup>33</sup>God loves you, Jeremiah, and your complaint  
is hurtful to Him as David's sling-rock to Goliath.

<sup>34</sup>O save me! My breath does not come!

The sky splits and the destroyer charges out of a whirlwind  
upon a horse of volcanic ash, I saw it too!

<sup>35</sup>Jeremiah, are we the only ones?

He is rushing toward our city on a meteor.

<sup>36</sup>I am stunned. I feel as if my hands have fallen to my feet.

<sup>37</sup>So terrifying the stain that passed over the sky,  
the dark storm that filled my eyes for a blink!

<sup>38</sup>Steer this ship, Jeremiah, away and away  
to some untouched shore, some place where the only noise  
is the exploding color upon slopes of wildflowers.

<sup>39</sup>We are on the lip of a hungry abyss!

<sup>40</sup>There is a bitter freeze around my throat,  
a death around my heart.

<sup>41</sup>Jeremiah, I saw it too, for an instant

I saw calamity utterly consume  
this giant love

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>42</sup>There is no blemish on the glow  
that surrounds you like a metal shield.

<sup>43</sup>But what good is a shield if the hurt is inside?

It only prevents the pain from escaping.

<sup>44</sup>My love cries, "O my suffering, my suffering!"

<sup>45</sup>He falls to the ground and closes his ears between his knees  
to silence the blare of horns.

<sup>46</sup>But the head of my love is an echo chamber  
and his knees only prevent the siren from escaping.

<sup>47</sup>The walls of his heart strain with hurt.



O Lord, let his heart break and begin to heal  
 rather than this perpetual and terrible swell!  
<sup>48</sup>He writhes and moans and cannot be silent.  
<sup>49</sup>Dear Jeremiah, I, who am Silence, do love you.  
<sup>50</sup>Were I to speak I would be swallowed by the din,  
 but with hushed lips I am your elixir of life.

<sup>51</sup>Your fatigue over your people wearies me.  
<sup>52</sup>I pray you forgive me a wave of mild animosity  
 and rather admire me my honest confession:  
 Jeremiah, the people are not worthy of your suffering!  
<sup>53</sup>They will never give you heed. They have no fear of Heaven.  
<sup>54</sup>The people are love-struck through the cunning of predator gods  
 while here in your wake is a one,  
 a one who heeds your every tear,  
 a one who hears the soft whistle in your deep-throated sigh,  
 a one who envies the people your sorrow.  
<sup>55</sup>Do not pity the people. They are foolish children!  
 Rather, pity the knowing.  
 A no one,  
 me.

<sup>56</sup>I hear an anguished cry  
 that severs the cord between us.  
<sup>57</sup>I turn and scamper under a thicket  
 and clamber over a crumbling ledge.  
<sup>58</sup>In the midst of this deserted ruin  
 lies a woman with her knees wide,  
 her belly ripe and a storm in her face.  
<sup>59</sup>Her sleeves are drenched,  
 she stretches out her hand  
 and I crouch before her.  
<sup>60</sup>My arms tremble and my head  
 is heavy with her musk.  
 She clenches a fistful of my hair

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and shrieks into my neck.  
<sup>61</sup>With hot, stinging eyes,  
my fingers hook gently  
like talons  
under two bloody shoulders,  
<sup>62</sup>so little, was I? was I ever this . . .  
soft and afraid, arms slippery  
and long as eels, dearest eyes  
sealed and messy mouth  
blue as early morning  
without breath.  
<sup>63</sup>“Alas for me! I faint . . .”  
the woman gasps, life dimming.  
I wrap my arms around her and sob  
terribly. <sup>64</sup>With a dying hand she  
urges my head toward her breast  
and I suck at her sweet milk.  
“Don’t let it spill, not one drop,”  
she says, soft, <sup>65</sup>my mother  
is alive in my mind, in my mouth.  
I weep and I drink forever, it seems.  
It comes so slowly.  
<sup>66</sup>The woman turns cold,  
her faint smile and stiff  
heavy fingers on the back of my neck.  
My mouth is empty.

5

You roam the streets of this city  
and I follow, close  
enough for the fringe of your robe  
to lap at my ankles, but far  
enough for a herd of wild elephants to pass.  
<sup>2</sup>Your eyes are searching for one

innocent memory,  
when God was quiet,  
nights were dreamless,  
and men paid no mind.

<sup>3</sup>Your eyes are searching the city squares  
while I am searching  
your eyes.

<sup>4</sup>A branch switches at my legs  
and I fall.

<sup>5</sup>My cheek is torn against the coarse sand  
and a man's foot is hard on the small of my back.

<sup>6</sup>He kicks me over and I scream out:  
"Jeremiah!" but no voice escapes.  
He has a face harder than rock.

<sup>7</sup>O prophet, you roam the squares  
searching for integrity,  
and all the while it is trailing behind you,  
<sup>8</sup>here inside me is integrity and goodness,  
wonder and love, yet you never turn back,  
you never turn and see.

<sup>9</sup>Is my prophet foolish?  
He hears the obvious blare of horns  
but is deaf to my silent cry.

<sup>10</sup>Are you not a prophet?  
Can you not hear my unspoken word?

"Jeremiah!

"Jeremiah!

"Jeremiah!"

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<sup>11</sup>He takes me with bruising grip  
to the ravaging tent,  
beats me upon my already bleeding scalp.

<sup>12</sup>The branch comes down as a switch  
and with each blow  
I see a shock of white light.

<sup>13</sup>An anger wells up in my throat,  
strangely, not toward him.  
No, toward him I feel profound sorrow.

<sup>14</sup>I feel the need to explain  
that he has made a mistake,  
that I am everything good left in Fair Zion,  
everything beautiful hidden underneath,  
and he does not realize, <sup>15</sup>he thinks  
I am just another street rat,  
he does not know that I am the keeper of a love,  
a love of a prophet.

<sup>16</sup>This is a mistake.  
I can forgive a mistake.  
But you . . .

<sup>17</sup>Why should I forgive you?  
You have forsaken me, Jeremiah.

<sup>18</sup>How is it that you listen to God  
the Most Secret  
and cannot intuit my longing?

<sup>19</sup>How is it that your eyes are filled  
with the rot of this city,  
and are blind to the blooming  
in my heart?

<sup>20</sup>And how could you keep  
walking and keep searching,  
and how dare you  
take your infatuated God with you  
when I am the one,

<sup>21</sup>I am the one who needs Him,  
and needs you, stupid prophet!  
and needs help  
and please rescue  
my integrity  
which is the  
only integrity  
left, in this

<sup>22</sup>biting on my lip  
and marking my neck,  
<sup>23</sup>in the corner of my eye I see a child enter the tent  
and glance over at me and my destroyer,  
and he sees the child too,  
shoos the child away  
and tears my dress.  
<sup>24</sup>Curse you, Jeremiah!  
You have betrayed me!

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>25</sup>Blessed child peeks into the tent again.  
The man stabs under my skirts with the branch,  
<sup>26</sup>a tree branch!  
Of all things!  
There is an insane laughter in my gut.  
<sup>27</sup>Good-bye God! Go on and trail Your chosen like a pup,  
leaving us alone to fend off Heaven's cruelest ironies.  
<sup>28</sup>A light, willowy sneeze from the tent flap,  
young voyeur,  
awash in afternoon light  
chewing on a scythe of carob.  
A glance to the side,  
<sup>29</sup>is the child his son?  
I turn and grasp a rock

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and pound it once against his ear.

<sup>30</sup>His son pulls back and I roll out from under.

The man twists over with a thunder in his brain  
and I run.

<sup>31</sup>I see my legs running and remember  
the long arms of the stillbirth.

Strange connections.

<sup>32</sup>I know the man is not following me  
but I am no longer running from him.

I am running from you,

<sup>33</sup>you who have proven to be mere wind.

You who care not

if a leopard lies in wait.

<sup>33</sup>Good-bye Jeremiah!

Cling to your God.

I shall surely forget you from afar

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>34</sup>I have an enduring spirit,

perhaps even an ancient spirit.

<sup>35</sup>I run until my body is hollow.

A sheath of rock is before me  
and vines with bitter berries creep up.

<sup>36</sup>I nestle in the back of a yawning cave  
and blackout sleep overtakes me.

A nightmare surfaces out of the black,  
a vision out of the tar . . .

<sup>37</sup>I am a fortified city.

My citizens peaceful but watchful inside.

<sup>38</sup>One night, the trees pull up their roots  
and gather from the surrounding hills as an army.

They batter me down with clubs.

<sup>39</sup>I scratch forty days ~ wrote Anatiya ~ into the wall of the cave. There will be no end to this solitude. <sup>40</sup>I eat berries and mushrooms and drink grassy tea. I think of Hannah's lips, moving while no voice is heard. <sup>41</sup>Eli assumed she was drunk and exiled her from the holy place. <sup>42</sup>But I know that Hannah could herself hear her voice. I talk to myself here in this cave, and my voice resonates off the walls and rings in my ears.

<sup>43</sup>The stories I tell in this cave are a violin song.  
 There is a wind chime in this cave; it is my laugh.  
<sup>44</sup>My song is a chorus of birds.  
 My faintest sigh is the coo of a dove.  
<sup>45</sup>But to Eli, I am mute.  
 To Jeremiah, I was never born.  
 They have ears but cannot hear!

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>46</sup>And You?  
 You Who set the sand as a boundary to the sea?  
<sup>47</sup>You by Whose wisdom the hawk  
 spreads his wings to the south?  
<sup>48</sup>You Who know the hosts of Heaven  
 and call every star by name?  
 Do you hear me?  
<sup>49</sup>Forgive me, Lord Most High!  
 Forgive my headstrong challenge!  
<sup>50</sup>I know, now, the truth about Cain and Abel.  
 Don't You see?  
<sup>51</sup>I love Jeremiah the way Cain loved You!  
<sup>52</sup>Cain loved You and Abel kept seducing You  
 with gifts and plenty, and I  
 do love Jeremiah, and You keep seducing him  
 with exquisite words and daring missions,  
<sup>53</sup>while all I have is this unruly vineyard  
 teeming with weeds and little foxes.  
<sup>54</sup>O God! Do you have to be so beautiful?

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<sup>55</sup>You Who bring the early and late rain in season,  
<sup>56</sup>You Who paint bows of color across the mist  
and beget the dewdrops,  
<sup>57</sup>forgive my ugliness, my anger.  
I am so tiresome and troublesome.  
<sup>58</sup>Do not judge me, for I am an orphan.  
<sup>59</sup>God knows that my deeds have been good,  
but do not punish me on account of my wicked thoughts

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>60</sup>It is an appalling and horrible thing  
to be an ancient scroll,  
filled with stories and secrets,  
prophesies and truths,  
<sup>61</sup>a tapestry of words sewn together  
with golden thread,  
hidden in an earthen jar sealed tightly,  
and buried deep in a cave, in a sheath of rock,  
where no one can find you, or touch you, or know you.

6

From the lip of my dwelling-place  
I can see Jerusalem, white as snow,  
gold light gleaming as a crown  
on its rooftops,  
curling and spilling into the streets,  
<sup>2</sup>and at night, the moon  
casts a spidery web over the city,  
silver and deep blue,  
in which lovers and falling stars  
become entangled.



<sup>3</sup>Around the walls I can see men pitching tents.

They have weapons in their stocks  
and they bide their time.

<sup>4</sup>As the day declines  
and the shadows of evening grow long,  
they gather around fires and make plans.

<sup>5</sup>Jerusalem knows what is coming,  
and she waits there royally  
and mightily.

<sup>6</sup>Nowhere are the shadows of evening more alluring.  
Her stones are strangely tranquil.

<sup>7</sup>Long ago, when the followers of Korach offered offerings to the Lord  
upon fire pans, the Lord's fire consumed them whole.

<sup>8</sup>And yet, even in the midst of the charred corpses and wailing,  
the fire pans became holy.

<sup>9</sup>This is the secret the stones of Jerusalem know:  
When the fortress is destroyed  
and wickedness purged,  
after the burning and the bloodlust,  
even in the midst of the charred remains, <sup>10</sup>the stones  
will be holy  
and eternal.

<sup>11</sup>Thus says Anatiya:

Here I am hidden  
in the cleft of the rock.

<sup>12</sup>O God, let Your goodness pass before me!  
Let Your hand shield me from Your radiance,  
let me gaze safely from behind  
tendrils of vines!

<sup>13</sup>I have run like a gazelle  
swiftly away from my love.

<sup>14</sup>I was afraid of being consumed like firewood  
in this furnace of desire.

<sup>15</sup>It heats my chest and dries my throat.

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It leaps and licks at my belly  
in tiny tightened fists.  
I cannot hold it in.

<sup>16</sup>I was afraid it would pour out,  
hot as the mouth of the Leviathan,  
that eruptive, boiling cauldron.

<sup>17</sup>Better I surrender to the cool and dank  
than show my need, this monstrous thing.

<sup>18</sup>My sneezes flash lightning,  
firebrands stream from my mouth,  
and my breath ignites coals,  
eyes glimmering red as dawn

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>19</sup>I have acted shamefully  
with nothing but greed in my heart.

<sup>20</sup>I wanted to eclipse You, God,  
with my little pursed lips,  
and a shrug of narrow shoulder.

<sup>21</sup>But is there not room enough in man  
for the love of Heaven and the  
affections of a mortal woman?  
Or is the heart too small to bear it?

<sup>22</sup>O God! All is not well  
with the way You have made us!

<sup>23</sup>Put me back, Majestic Creator,  
Put me back into his breast!  
I want my place by his heart.

<sup>24</sup>O, let Jeremiah be the first complete man  
since Adam, with all of his ribs in place,  
and let me be the one to complete him.

<sup>25</sup>I am almost bone as it is, dear Lord.  
Open the spot while he sleeps  
and bury me inside

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>26</sup>I have run like a gazelle  
 swiftly away from my love  
 because I was afraid of the coldness  
 that seized my ankles  
 when I fell and he did not turn.

<sup>27</sup>I felt as if I were a strand of hair on his head  
 that had become detached.

<sup>28</sup>A hair that had come loose and slipped  
 from among his beautiful locks  
 rolling down his back,  
 Good-bye Jeremiah!

<sup>29</sup>I felt as insignificant,  
 as meaningless as a single hair  
 shed from a rich, black mane,  
 as unimportant.

<sup>30</sup>I am sick for you still.  
 I chew on my fingers in my anxiety.  
 Dear God! <sup>31</sup>My stubbornness refuses to let me go,  
 though I pine for the shelter of his shadow.

<sup>32</sup>I will wait many moons  
 and waste away  
 on berries and mushrooms and grassy teas  
 and stare flat-eyed at the Eastern gate.

<sup>33</sup>And if You should make for me this sign,  
 I will know there is a secret meaning  
 to my unclaimed life, and I shall be happy  
 to return to my shepherd and my love.

<sup>34</sup>And the sign shall be this:  
 He shall walk through that gate  
 and the pink morning light will cast over him a blush.

<sup>35</sup>He will take a razor to his head and shear away his locks  
 and cast them away, and they shall sweep upward to me,  
 every strand of hair. <sup>36</sup>Then I will know that he knows.  
 I will know I have been destined  
 to cherish him, here-ever, here-after,  
 as witness and hidden disciple,  
 whisper and caress.

Gasp! My soul leaps into my throat, I see a vision! A man in white linen is coming through the gate. <sup>2</sup>His head is high and lovely, O, let me gaze upon his face! <sup>3</sup>My eyes are saltwater fountains, pent-up springs that have just now burst. <sup>4</sup>He walks with a grace, with the grace of a tree, his body a white-barked tree and his hair a tumble of willow leaves. <sup>5</sup>It has been nearly three moons since I have looked upon you, my life. O, your presence astonishes!

<sup>6</sup>Praised be God in Heaven! Praised be God on earth! Praised be God in you, dear prophet. <sup>7</sup>He dangles you like a lantern filled with His Own light, a light which is sown for the righteous. <sup>8</sup>He holds you in front of Him the way a woman holds a candle as she creeps from room to room to blow a kiss to each of her children as they lay asleep in the dark. I have been asleep! <sup>9</sup>For three moons I have been asleep, relying on illusions that are of no avail. <sup>10</sup>True, I have cleansed my body with grassy tea. I have wrestled the demons of the cliff. I have slept with a rock for my pillow. I have shaded my skin from the swarthing sun, healed my passion-wracked frame. <sup>11</sup>But the instant I see you appear, out of clouds of dust, I feel the sickness overtake me again, grab hold of my heart and steal my breath. I am sick for you! Sick in love! <sup>12</sup>I never again want to be numbly healthful. Rather, let me be filled with hurt and longing. Let me burn. <sup>13</sup>I feel God when I see you! I feel God racing through my veins and rousing every bit of me. <sup>14</sup>A shofar blasts through my body. Wake all you sleepers! Wake! I am alive, and trembling. <sup>15</sup>The tiny hairs on my body stand up like a troop. Praised be God for this frenzy of living!

<sup>16</sup>As for me, if I could just watch you ~wrote Anatiya.

<sup>17</sup>My spirit rushes to go to its place while my body stands dumb-founded upon the ledge. <sup>18</sup>When I am beside you, Jeremiah, I am an astronomer and you are the sky. Here in this cave I am the queen of the mountain, grand and glorious. <sup>19</sup>In your shadow I am only a speck of cinnamon dust, but the life in me is great, like the wide-leafed plant concealed within the tiny mustard seed. <sup>20</sup>How I rebelled against you! When I called to you and you did not respond, I doubted you. <sup>21</sup>Now I see you, sun-kissed, and I know . . . that here in this cave I am grand but nameless, but there in your wake I am Anatiya!

<sup>22</sup>As for you, I hear you raise a cry of prayer on behalf of a crescent of listeners before you. Their eyes are placid and their mouths curl up half mocking. <sup>23</sup>In their hearts they are thinking, “Good thing he is not my son!” and “How entertaining!” <sup>24</sup>But to me, your words are delicate ice crystals fanning over the sky. <sup>25</sup>While children wander away to gather sticks, and fathers absentmindedly slow-roast leg of lamb, and mothers distract themselves with flour and water and frivolous fingers, I stand transfixed and absorbed.

<sup>26</sup>How they vex you! ~wrote Anatiya. <sup>27</sup>It is rather themselves whom they vex, to their own disgrace. <sup>28</sup>But I see straight through those husks and shells and into the kernel of you. It has the gleam of amber, a fire encased in a frame. <sup>29</sup>Out of the core, torches and flares dash forth on wings. The sound of the wings is like the sound of mighty waters, and these are your words, the words of Shaddai. <sup>30</sup>They burn, and vast floods cannot quench them, nor rivers drown them.

<sup>31</sup>Thus writes Anatiya ~ I see that the wrath of God fills you, but the wrath is not your own. You yourself are love, Jeremiah. <sup>32</sup>I can see you, Jeremiah, standing boldly between God and those cities Sodom and Gomorrah, standing in Abraham’s place. <sup>33</sup>Abraham had argued that God spare these cities if there be found a number of righteous people inside. <sup>34</sup>But you would argue differently, I know. <sup>35</sup>You would say, “Far be it from You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the people when they still might repent! <sup>36</sup>Would You wipe out the whole city if there be found one chance that a sinner might change? <sup>37</sup>What if there should be found one rebel who might turn to You in future days, turn to You and repent, will You destroy the whole city and not forgive it for the sake of one reluctant repentant? <sup>38</sup>Will the One Who created the world out of nothing, Who moved potentiality to actuality, will He ignore all potential in these large cities of living beings?”

<sup>39</sup>All at once, your eyes lift, burning coals full of fever. Your eyes lift and look into my own! <sup>40</sup>All my life I have been the noticer, but never, until this moment, the one to be noticed. Your mouth is stilled, lips parted. <sup>41</sup>All the world melts but your eyes remain locked to mine across four thousand cubits of rolling hills. My chest lifts and falls like a newborn fawn. <sup>42</sup>The blue falls out of the sky. Creation is as empty as the day before time, and as endless. <sup>43</sup>God is hovering over us, a wind that tousles our hair, expanding. <sup>44</sup>I feel a great inhaling, everything I have ever known

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draws inward, into God's deep inhaling. Floating, my feet are filled with air, and you keep looking at me. <sup>45</sup>I was a scroll sealed tightly in an earthen jar, hidden in a sheath of rock, and you have pierced me, unrolled me, and now you are reading me. <sup>46</sup>Your eyes are two disks filled with seeing. Jeremiah! <sup>47</sup>The light is vanishing, bleeding away from us. <sup>48</sup>My head is water, my eyes a fount of tears. <sup>49</sup>You look at me. Your eyes say, "Let there be," and all at once, I am.

<sup>50</sup>And then you take a razor in your hand  
and sheer your lustrous locks. I lament!  
That I ever made such a vow!  
<sup>51</sup>The wind bears them onto the heights

and I gather them, every one, like a bundle of grain. <sup>52</sup>I tie them together with my arms. They fall over me in a swath of black silk. <sup>53</sup>You lower your eyes and the world reappears. <sup>54</sup>You might never look to me again, but it matters not. <sup>55</sup>I am cast into the depths, into the heartbeat of the sea. <sup>56</sup>Your sweetest floods engulf me and lovely breakers and billows sweep above me. <sup>57</sup>Your waters close in over me. I drink them in! I sink to the base of the mountains, rocking gently as a feather from a great height, weeds twine around my head, and I rest on the kelp of the ocean floor, soft and pure. <sup>58</sup>As many stars are in the Heavens is as many cubits deep am I, deep in love, drowning in dreaming.

8

All at once ~wrote Anatiya ~ my bones are seeped with understanding. <sup>2</sup>Were you the child who peeked into the room? <sup>3</sup>Suddenly the illusions of this life are torn out of their graves and exposed to the blazing sun. <sup>4</sup>All is layers, layers of meanings, existing together in the subtlest of harmony. <sup>5</sup>My ears are suddenly tuned in to these intricacies of music and meaning. <sup>6</sup>In this stationary rock I see a parade of activity. In the white core of the sun I see all colors. <sup>7</sup>I now hear your words, which I have loved from afar, which I have heard addressed always to others and never to me, I now hear them in layers. <sup>8</sup>I hear you speaking to me, almost courting, softly and tearfully, explaining to me, gently, the nature of being. <sup>9</sup>Do you love me? Have you always loved me? <sup>10</sup>On the surface you speak of the wicked folk, but underneath you tickle me with fantasies, with the voice of the bridegroom rejoicing over his bride.

<sup>11</sup>What you say to them they cannot interpret,  
but I now see the myriad meanings  
you heap upon the precious crown of the letter *yud*.

<sup>12</sup>I am now wise to the betrayal of sight!

<sup>13</sup>Eve saw that the fruit was a delight to the eyes,  
and even so when she ate, her eyes were opened!

<sup>14</sup>There are so many layers to seeing,  
the deepest of which is called insight.

<sup>15</sup>We are born with only the barest level of sight.

We are basically blind,  
and ego is our stumbling block.

<sup>16</sup>I surrender my ego to loving you,

I surrender my being to love,

and at once my eyes are opened

and I see that we are naked,

and I see that we are alone

under a lush

canopy of trees

on a plush

carpet of dewy grass.

<sup>17</sup>Your fingers taste

sixty times sweeter than honey.

<sup>18</sup>Rivers wind through the whole land

and God's voice is here, strolling.

Fruit hangs with heavy pulp

sticky on our hands

and in our lips.

<sup>19</sup>Your lips are crimson.

Your body is gold

and seamless.

<sup>20</sup>A bed of blossoms

and beams of cedar

and cypress.

The flutter of a turtledove.

<sup>21</sup>My eyes are opened and I see

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even deeper than Eve.  
I see that I want to stay here,  
I am not eager to leave.  
<sup>22</sup>I love this clear-water wellspring.  
I love this frankincense forest.  
I have no trace of wanderlust.  
<sup>23</sup>I spin the two cherubs  
with their fiery swords  
around and around  
until they are dizzy  
and giddy  
and drunk on my rapture,  
<sup>24</sup>so they think they are keeping us out,  
but in truth they are keeping us in.

<sup>25</sup>I am wise to the deception of sight.  
I see in this desert  
there is the ghost of an ocean  
<sup>26</sup>I see in this Temple  
there is the Tower of Babel,  
scratching at Heaven's  
glassy surface.  
<sup>27</sup>The House that bears His Name  
is defiled to make a name for ourselves.  
<sup>28</sup>God is pulling back His bow  
like an archer.  
His arrow is a foreign nation.  
<sup>29</sup>He will scatter us soon  
over the face of the earth.  
He will confound our language  
and confuse our tongue.  
<sup>30</sup>I hear you weeping,  
"All is not well."  
<sup>31</sup>You know that we are naked and  
only you and I are blushing.



<sup>32</sup>Only you and I are wise  
to the flagrant bond between  
shame  
and joy.

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>33</sup>I will not harvest the corners of our love

~WROTE ANATIYA

<sup>34</sup>but let the poor gather up grapes  
and baskets of purple-hearted figs.

<sup>35</sup>I will toss morsels to the loveless throngs  
as into a wishing well.

<sup>36</sup>Why do they sit by  
with their heads bowed  
and eyes lowered?

<sup>37</sup>Let them gather and search  
for the fountain of youth  
in the midst of the city,  
and drink from its glistening draft.

<sup>38</sup>Sated in its dew  
they will never die old,  
but sing and dance into Sheol  
a thousand years young.

<sup>39</sup>Lo, my kisses I will pile upon my palm like pollen on a petal,  
and blow them to you on a sweet gust of my breath  
that they might germinate in your pores.

~WROTE ANATIYA.

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<sup>40</sup>Your head is the chief cornerstone of the Temple  
upon which bears down an unbearable wall.

<sup>41</sup>My heart is shattered when I see you crumble.  
God's wrath is a poisoned well in your gut  
rumbling up into your throat. Vile taste!

<sup>42</sup>Where is our mikvah of pure living waters?

<sup>43</sup>Hark! The outcry of my poor prophet!  
The mountains tremble.

The Temple walls shudder and quake.

<sup>44</sup>The world tilts awkwardly,  
like a drunkard, staggering through the ruins.

<sup>45</sup>Seized by desolation . . . I cry for you from the dark corner.  
I gather your shadow into my arms.

<sup>46</sup>It is brittle and cold, quaking in the first throes of dying.

<sup>47</sup>I brush off the dust and kiss its fluttering eyelids,  
and gently rock it in the cradle of my bosom, singing:

<sup>48</sup>"Hush, shadow, hush. I am your island of calm.

Return to our prophet,  
surround his body like a moat around a castle,  
fed by the fount of his tears.

Let no killing thing cross.

Let none pull asunder."

<sup>49</sup>The shadow slips from me, healed,  
and Jeremiah finally succumbs  
to slumber, <sup>50</sup>face damp,  
and young as a child.

<sup>51</sup>In the morning I press my lips  
to the tearstains on his sleeping mat,  
and I shiver as a flower with pleasure  
with the touch of morning dew.

9

O to be in the desert with you,  
with its ribbons of gold and rose.

<sup>2</sup>To leave this people  
and to hide in a secret oasis,  
and to love unashamed  
under the open sky

with its voyeuristic sun,  
<sup>3</sup>our bodies sanded and rose-colored.  
<sup>4</sup>The desert stares like the giant amber eye  
of a lion, purring,  
we dance and leap, two flecks,  
where nobody heeds us

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>5</sup>O friend of my heart,  
were you only my brother  
we could suckle from the same breast.  
<sup>6</sup>We could speak loudly across the marketplace,  
“Peace, sister! Peace, brother!”  
<sup>7</sup>You could embrace me and kiss me lightly.  
If only you were a nobody like me!  
<sup>8</sup>If only you were insignificant, overlooked,  
we could shout our careless love with trumpets  
and none would pay us any heed!

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>9</sup>I assure you, the place in my dreams does exist.  
<sup>10</sup>A place on the opposite side of the world  
that is the opposite of everything here.  
<sup>11</sup>A garden springs up in the midst of an orchard,  
and a stone bench—

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carved in the manner of Betzalel,  
overlaid with gold,  
two cherubs leaning in, wings touching  
to form a seat for two—  
waits by a fountain that spills,  
whose bubbles are the giggling of children.  
<sup>12</sup>The opposite of everything here,  
the sandy road is a pathway of precious stones  
crushed into glittering dust

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>13</sup>Paradise is only as far as the flame from the wick.

<sup>14</sup>A bench in the manner of Betzalel  
waits for two lovers to rest and find repose,  
to gaze into each other's eyes  
as into green pastures,  
<sup>15</sup>while vines thick with roses entwine round their legs,  
while their footprints fill with spring poppies  
and lilies drop out of the sky.

<sup>16</sup>I know this place is called Milashuri,  
and when we go there and grasp hands and find repose,  
the spirit will move the cherub's wings  
and lift the lovers over many ladders of cloud  
upon the chariots of Amminadab.

<sup>17</sup>Dear Lord, in Your wisdom  
You understand this girl,  
whose life is but a forgotten dream,  
whose heart is a shattered urn.

<sup>18</sup>Gather these pieces, merciful Lord!  
Fit them into a mosaic on the Temple floor,  
and let the high priests tread on my desire.

<sup>19</sup>I am but dust, my Lord.

Sweep me up!  
Sweep me in Your kindness  
into Divine Evermore!

<sup>20</sup>Jeremiah is being scolded on behalf of all people. God's words are fire-filled hailstones. <sup>21</sup>God gave His only daughter to Israel as a bride, and she has returned to Him bruised and mistreated. <sup>22</sup>Downcast and dejected, she frets about Heaven, twisting her porcelain hands. <sup>23</sup>"Don't avenge Yourself upon him, O Father, please! He is a good husband, with a pure love in his heart, I swear unto You! <sup>24</sup>He is just a bit young! A little stubborn, a little human, dear Father! Don't scatter him, don't slay him. <sup>25</sup>You can't expect him to be just like You!" <sup>26</sup>But God looks upon her and weeps. He says, "Once you had no creases on your brow, and your eyes were clear as a river." <sup>27</sup>He lifts up His sword to chase Israel. Torah falls to her knees and clutches His robe.

<sup>28</sup>She cries:  
"It is only because I have become human in his arms!"  
<sup>29</sup>She seizes the corner of His robe and it tears.  
<sup>30</sup>He turns to her in anger and says:  
"I have this day torn your marriage with Israel.  
Summon the dirge-singers! <sup>31</sup>Let them wail for you.  
From now on the sons of men shall not  
take wives from among divine beings.  
<sup>32</sup>My breath will not dwell in them forever."  
Her tears wash over the mountain of the north.

<sup>33</sup>The sound of her wailing  
is heard from Heaven.  
<sup>34</sup>She clutches the golden ring  
which Moses himself handed her  
when she appeared to him  
in blazing beauty.

<sup>35</sup>God is so jealous,  
so livid when He looks at the hearts of men

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that He forgets the redemptive love  
found in the hearts of women!  
And so I cry out, "I love!"

"I love!"

"I love!"

<sup>36</sup>My ears receive the teachings of Your mouth,  
and yet, death creeps over my windowsill,  
consuming the feathery hopes of young virgins  
and of the frightened mothers with babes in their bellies and arms,  
only because they stand innocently in Your barreling way  
to cut off all the men from the squares.

<sup>37</sup>To punish You for tearing her marriage,  
to punish You for pursuing her groom,  
to punish You for the loves You left  
piled like sheaves behind the reaper,

<sup>38</sup>Your daughter erases the names of the women from her scroll,  
Your careful latticework of female legend she blots out, saying:

<sup>39</sup>"If You will not see us in Your wild stampede,  
than I will not have You write us!"

<sup>40</sup>God is in search of man  
and man is in search of God,  
and woman is irreconcilably lost

~WROTE ANATIYA.

<sup>41</sup>You take note of the circumcised of Israel ~wrote Anatiya~ <sup>42</sup>You count them with half shekels. When do you count me? <sup>43</sup>Am I the same as a forlorn girl of fourteen from Egypt or Edom, Ammon or Moab? <sup>44</sup>Who am I in this great House of Israel? I will tell You who I am. <sup>45</sup>I am the Temple treasure. I am the whisper of the secret name in the Holy of Holies. <sup>46</sup>I am the quickened pulse. I am the blood that purifies the altar. <sup>47</sup>I am just as You are, my God and my Redeemer, I am that I am. I will be what I will be.

## 10

Hear the words that I say to you, O mournful Jeremiah!

<sup>2</sup>Do not be dismayed by the portents in the sky, my love,  
do not beat yourself over the profanity of others.

<sup>3</sup>You weary me with your sorrow,  
weary me to death, my love,  
every teardrop is a nail,  
every sob is a hammer  
that secures my grave.

Heaven forbid!

<sup>4</sup>You totter there like a scarecrow in a cucumber patch,  
and the crows are getting wise to your impotence.

<sup>5</sup>Let them gorge themselves on the shallow minds,  
and you walk away with me.

<sup>6</sup>I will kiss you until you are raw  
and red and alive,

<sup>7</sup>I will kiss you until your senses sizzle  
like sweet butter  
on a hot stone.

You will see that it is good.

<sup>8</sup>You are hashmal, gleaming amber,  
when streaking God-bolts  
thrust jagged daggers across the sky,  
slashing it into the slow-bleeding sunsets  
that embrace your silhouette.

<sup>9</sup>You run but the storm never leaves you;  
it clings like fog to a mountain.

<sup>10</sup>The lightning races fast as thought,  
frantic for a place to land,  
for a place to bridge sky and land  
in a momentary star-way-stairway of light.

<sup>11</sup>It leaves cedar and steppe unscathed,

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preferring to pound its light into you,  
my weary prophet,  
striking with deafening light and blinding thunder.

<sup>12</sup>You are ignited and bright as hashmal;  
you cage a tiny sun in your breast  
and it streams through your eyes  
and sears over your lips.

<sup>13</sup>I could be your blanket of snow;  
I am as muted and blank.  
I could quiet you and cool you.

<sup>14</sup>Your fever would melt me away  
before my presence was felt.  
A slight shiver is all I am.

<sup>15</sup>The world was created through a series of separations. Light from darkness. Day from night. Earth from sea from sky. Second from first.

<sup>16</sup>O, let my darkness reunite with his light!  
Though the world be unborn,  
though we return to the void,  
<sup>17</sup>though we become unformed!  
At least unformed we cannot bear Your yoke.

<sup>18</sup>Forgive me my mockery, dear God!  
With what frivolity I speak,  
with no discipline in my thoughts,  
obscuring counsel without knowledge,  
speaking without understanding  
of things beyond me, which I do not know.

<sup>19</sup>I recant. I relent.

I am but dust and ashes!

<sup>20</sup>You established the world in Your wisdom.

<sup>21</sup>You bring forth the wind from Your treasuries.

<sup>22</sup>You form all things perfectly  
and with purpose.



Mortal eyes cannot see this.

<sup>23</sup>Dear God, how I love You!

How I love Your good Name!

<sup>24</sup>You are my God and there is none else,  
in the Heavens above and on the earth below,  
all else is delusion.

<sup>25</sup>I gather up my bundle from the ground  
and march after my love like an ant.

<sup>26</sup>For once, I am grateful for my muteness. When Jeremiah speaks, he is a masterful orator, expertly spinning lyrics and parables. <sup>27</sup>He harnesses his voice into speeches that dance before chariots of kings.

<sup>28</sup>If I were to speak,  
what folly would pour from my mouth!

<sup>29</sup>I can blot out the words that I write  
and pen them, inspired, anew.

<sup>30</sup>But a spoken word cannot be retracted.  
I may have broken cords, or  
caused great commotion  
if I spoke out of fever,  
or out of distress.

<sup>31</sup>The passion in my soul  
may have been dull when encased  
in the limits of spoken language.

<sup>32</sup>It is the spontaneity of speech  
that frightens me the most!  
Writing needs no such spontaneity.

<sup>33</sup>How many times would I have opened my mouth  
in a rush to call out, "How I need you! How it hurts!"

<sup>34</sup>The shame! I can only imagine him  
turning around,  
shoulders dropping,  
head shaking,

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and then he would flee from my need,  
from my intrusiveness,  
from my noise.

<sup>35</sup>Or perhaps

he would fall to his knees,  
perhaps my voice would shatter the spell  
and free him, and he would weep into my neck,  
my hands in his hair . . .

<sup>36</sup>I know, O Lord, that You have chosen this path for me,  
and that it has meaning even without the spoken word.

<sup>37</sup>I know, also, that because my mouth is silent  
my thoughts are all the louder.

You surely hear them. <sup>38</sup>You surely disapprove,  
at times. But let me keep them.

Though they nag and disturb,  
and become lusty and base.

<sup>39</sup>You may chastise me for them, O Lord, in measure.

<sup>40</sup>But let me keep them, lest I become naught,  
as silent inside as out,  
a numb thing,  
with no self to keep herself company.

11

The covenant which Anatiya wrote ~

I make this covenant between you, Jeremiah son of Hilkiyah, and myself, Anatiya daughter of Avigayil, in the presence of the pink of dawn.

<sup>2</sup>Because God has locked your soul in a golden cage, you cannot court and love a woman in the way of the common man. <sup>3</sup>(The common man does not know how fortunate he is!) <sup>4</sup>And so, I betroth myself to you in righteousness. I betroth myself to you for eternity. <sup>5</sup>As for you, I ask only one condition. <sup>6</sup>That you not let me die. <sup>7</sup>That you sustain me through the power of your calling from God. <sup>8</sup>And only when you are near the end of your days, that you allow my life to be released, that you let God in to

gather me, and that you yourself, prophet, you yourself with your own hands take my body and carry me, wash me, and bury me in a white linen robe that you have worn. <sup>9</sup>You respond, "Amen."

<sup>10</sup>This is the covenant I make with you: <sup>11</sup>Though we may never touch in this life, though you may never know me, as the first man knew the first woman on the outskirts of paradise, I will bear for you offspring, indeed, as many as there are stars in the heavens. <sup>12</sup>However, the firstborn I shall not have to redeem, for the babe will not be the issue of my womb.

<sup>13</sup>Rather, we will adopt the unknowns. <sup>14</sup>We will adopt the children who feel a royalty in their breast, but have been given the role of the comedian. <sup>15</sup>We will adopt every mind who has a fantasy, for our love is none but a fantasy, a fantasy which infects, a fantasy as thick as this heat, a fantasy which draws the sweat from my body and leaves me short of breath. <sup>16</sup>We will be patriarch of vision, matriarch of dream.

<sup>17</sup>Every now and then, a person catches a glimpse of himself in a pool, and does not recognize his own face in the reflection. <sup>18</sup>Sometimes, a person does not recognize her entire life. In their minds, they are living another life. <sup>19</sup>A life of luxuries that never existed. A life of love that is never expressed. <sup>20</sup>A life of daring, a life that never surfaces, but is kept jailed inside by a name: daughter of, father of . . . or by a label: wife of, servant of. <sup>21</sup>Inside the merchant is a sailor. Inside the slave is a scribe. <sup>22</sup>Inside every person is a laughing, sprightly wish, an acrobat who swings from the clouds. <sup>23</sup>These will be our offspring, Jeremiah, every one.

<sup>24</sup>Some day, be sure, they will seize the gates of their foes.

<sup>25</sup>They will peel away the husks,  
tired but determined.

<sup>26</sup>One day, be sure,  
they will peck and push their way out of their shells,  
roll into the light with their heads wobbling on little necks,  
gasp air, blink,  
and dry off,

<sup>27</sup>and suddenly,  
every single one will come to be.

<sup>28</sup>The membrane that covers the world will dissolve,  
and every one will be fantasy,  
creative and chaotic,

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spiraling upward in windstorms of color,  
in chiming collisions.

<sup>29</sup>On that day, the hosts of angels will look upon us  
as a source of immeasurable joy.

<sup>30</sup>This House is a dried cinder in a furnace, and I see there is a tremor  
in the world. <sup>31</sup>I see there is a pale terror that has settled on your face. <sup>32</sup>I  
see in your eyes that it is coming, Jeremiah, a cold decree.

<sup>33</sup>Remember in your despair that I am here.

<sup>34</sup>I knead small cakes and roast a bit of meat  
and leave it just inside your door.

<sup>35</sup>I am for you a shawl,  
draped limply over your shoulders,  
with fringe worn with worry,  
a comfort.

<sup>36</sup>I have no part in their conspiracy.  
They are only afraid of you  
because you make them feel naked,

<sup>37</sup>even the wealthy with their heavy garments  
feel chilled and exposed in your presence.

<sup>38</sup>They despise you because they are frightened.

<sup>39</sup>But remember this name as you bemoan your loneliness:  
Anatiya.

<sup>40</sup>This is the name of the girl  
whose love for you outweighs all hate.

<sup>41</sup>This is the name of the girl  
whose love for you comes from the highest of truths.  
I lay this love before you.

<sup>42</sup>Assuredly, I hear them plotting, seeking your very life. They fear  
your truth and figure to ensnare it like a dangerous beast. <sup>43</sup>They want to  
kill the truth and continue making love with their lies and delusions. <sup>44</sup>I  
am not afraid because God is a protective shield around you. <sup>45</sup>God will  
break the teeth of your enemies and give them as prey to the jackals. <sup>46</sup>He  
will incite death against them, and they will turn back, frustrated in their  
designs. <sup>47</sup>Your refuge is in the Lord; you are His trusting servant.

## 12

How I admire my gutsy prophet!  
 You blame not the people but the God,  
 risking your own life to make this claim!  
<sup>2</sup>He is the Maker of light and of darkness,  
 the Source of all good and evil.  
<sup>3</sup>You rail and your words punch and puncture.  
<sup>4</sup>A doubt is born in the highest heavens,  
 a reddish stain,  
 and the angels cower away from it in terror.  
<sup>5</sup>They wonder why the Lord stands aloof  
 and heedless in times of trouble.  
<sup>6</sup>If the ways of the wicked prosper,  
 is it not He who planted and sustained them?  
<sup>7</sup>Their mouths are full of oaths, deceit, and fraud;  
 mischief and evil are under their tongues,  
 but did He not say, <sup>8</sup>“Who gives man speech?  
 Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind?  
 Is it not I, the Lord?”  
<sup>9</sup>Is this our God, Who commands us saying,  
 “From the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden  
 you shall not eat, lest you die,”  
<sup>10</sup>and then shows us a tree whose sensuality  
 is the very envy of life itself?  
<sup>11</sup>The wicked think, “God is not mindful.  
 He hides His face. He never looks!”  
<sup>12</sup>The wicked think God does not see them  
 lurking in covert places,  
 spying out the hapless.  
 You do see them, God!  
<sup>13</sup>How long will you give the enemy the upper hand?  
<sup>14</sup>How long will the land languish  
 while the adversaries gloat  
 in treacherous decadence?

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<sup>15</sup>The Holy One answers you;  
“If you race with the foot-runners and they exhaust you,  
How then can you compete with the horses?”  
<sup>16</sup>You see only what is before you,  
like a horse wearing blinders,  
<sup>17</sup>while I see from the beginning to the end in a blink.  
I cause the rain to come in its season.

<sup>18</sup>See now, Jeremiah prepares his case,  
though he knows God will win it.  
<sup>19</sup>His challenge is barely audible,  
and yet it crashes through firmaments.  
<sup>20</sup>It re-releases the hurtled accusations  
of that victim Job:  
<sup>21</sup>“Will You harass a driven leaf?  
Will You pursue dried up straw  
that You decree for me bitter things,  
and put my feet in stocks?  
<sup>22</sup>I am like a garment eaten by moths.  
<sup>23</sup>Man born of woman is short-lived and sated with trouble.  
<sup>24</sup>He blossoms like a flower and withers.  
He vanishes like a shadow  
and does not endure.  
<sup>25</sup>Why do You fix Your gaze on such a one as me?”

<sup>26</sup>Who can produce a clean thing out of an unclean one?  
No one!  
<sup>27</sup>And You have made me unclean!  
You molded my clay with silt on Your hands.

<sup>28</sup>You set the limits that man cannot pass.  
<sup>29</sup>Turn away from me! That I may be at ease until,  
like a hireling, I finish out my day.  
<sup>30</sup>O, leave me alone, You unbearable weight!  
If You would leave me alone,

if You would just let me be,  
<sup>31</sup>I would console the bereaved,  
 I would clothe the naked,  
 yes, I would marry the orphan.  
<sup>32</sup>But You cage me  
 as a hostage in Your wrath!

<sup>33</sup>As water wears away stone,  
 torrents wash away earth,  
 so You destroy man's hope.  
<sup>34</sup>You overpower him forever and he perishes.  
<sup>35</sup>He may well slay me.  
 I may have no hope,  
 Yet I will argue my case before Him.  
<sup>36</sup>Your hands shaped and fashioned me  
 and then destroyed every part of me.

<sup>37</sup>Thus wrote Anatiya: Give him to me, O God!—before You whittle him away into nothing, <sup>38</sup>before You chisel him narrower and narrower and chip away his defenses and leave him brittle as exposed bone. <sup>39</sup>Dear God, I love his flesh and his heart. I love the waves of silk that grow from his scalp. <sup>40</sup>I love the pink pads of his fingertips. I love the rapid pulse in his neck. I love the perfect arch of his sole, the hollow behind his knee, the breath he heaves at day's end. <sup>41</sup>Give him over to me, O God! I will cherish his humanity. <sup>42</sup>I will soothe the flesh and blood of him. <sup>43</sup>Perhaps You will terrify and torment the soul of Jeremiah for all eternity with Your whims. What impact have I on Your eternity? <sup>44</sup>But for these fewscore years, while he is housed in a tender, bristling shell that ages and shivers and aches, give him to me. . . <sup>45</sup>because I love him. I love him, not for what he can do for Heaven or for Israel. <sup>46</sup>I love him because I am Anatiya and he is Jeremiah. <sup>47</sup>Let go of Him, Father. Here am I, a frail, female mortal, laughably commanding You the Commander: <sup>48</sup>You shall not murder, love.