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**All at Once: A Collection of Poems**

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*for anyone who needs healing*  
*- R.C.*

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## Beneath a Smile

A smile,  
a *smile*.

A smile for her kind friends  
A smile for her loving family  
A smile for the people she cares about  
A smile

A smile for everything and everyone in the world  
A smile that gives everyone hope

except herself.

A smile that's wide  
A grin, a beam  
A beautiful, dazzling smile  
one that brings others joy and excitement and laughter and all the good things in the world

except herself.

What gives her this deep grief?  
What causes her to weep herself to sleep every night?  
What makes her look in the mirror and say, "I'm not good enough"?

She, herself, doesn't know  
why  
She only knows that every single day  
something pierces her heart  
Something she feels but doesn't know quite  
what it is

And she covers up the misery with a smile  
like a piece of cloth covering a dying soul

She's finished, she's done  
There is no more hope; no more faith,  
just a fake, sparkling smile

Only she knows the pain that lies *beneath* her smile.



### If I Were an Emotion

If I were happiness,  
Believe me that I would  
bring joy to everyone in this world,  
I would  
make sure no person is left without a smile.

If I were sadness,  
Believe me that I would  
let people confide their sorrows to me,  
I would  
let their tears have a purpose.

If I were anger,  
Believe me that I would  
give people a place to take out their rage,  
I would  
slowly melt away and give them time to calm down.

If I were jealousy,  
Believe me that I would  
try to get rid of myself,  
I would  
remind people of what they have and why they should be grateful.

If I were fear,  
Believe me that I would  
let people know it's okay to be afraid,  
I would  
comfort them during frightening times.

If I were love,  
Believe me that I would  
fill people's hearts with affection,  
I would  
let everyone experience me at least once in their life.

If I were an emotion,  
Believe me that I would  
make sure people's thoughts and feelings have meanings  
I would  
make everything in life *worth it*.



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## Ode to Chocolate

Your sturdy frame,  
organized into eight identical square pieces.  
Each one a glossy dark brown,  
waiting to be devoured.  
Tear off the wrapping,  
snap a piece off  
Perfect to share.

A stressful day at work?  
A tough day at school?  
No problem, because we have  
you.  
Your purity, and being,  
pushes all of our worries away,  
and brings us together.

A bite and we are transported to  
Utopia.  
You soothe our minds,  
a sweet, tasty perfection.

A warm drink on a frosty winter day;  
a cooling lick on a sizzling summer.  
You are the perfect balance of bitter and sweet,  
a friend when we're in need.  
Something everyone can agree on.

If only everyone in this world could taste you,  
you lovely, delicious song.  
Chocolate,  
*thank you.*

## A Mother's Place

As she curls into a ball on her bed with an unsteady hand covering her face,  
she somberly contemplates,  
*no one can take a mother's place.*

Slowly, she tosses back and forth on the edge of her small bed  
and oh, how rapidly the mournful memories arrive, flooding her head.

She remembers the untouched meals, cooked with love, patiently waiting on her plate,  
the bitter nights when she sat unleashing her fury on the cold floor of her bedroom,  
the harsh words she spat out with ill-intended, forceful hate,  
the sorrowful days she filled with unnecessary, worthless gloom.

It was her concerned mother who appealed to her to eat,  
a request she refused to meet.

It was her considerate mother who had caringly knocked on her door,  
while she was getting her frustration out on the innocent floor.

It was her affectionate mother who hugged her warmly and tight,  
even after an upsetting, heartbreaking fight.

It was her joyful mother who cheered her up when she was down,  
the only person who would try to get rid of her frown.

She carries on weeping into her damp palm,  
feeling guilty for how she was to her mom.

Looking between her frail fingers, she catches a glimpse of the pale gray wall,  
and slowly brushes her hand off of her face.  
Gazing at the cloudy surface, she recognizes a photograph of her and her mother  
in a comforting, familiar place.

In the picture, she thoughtfully notices  
her loving mother, who admiringly keeps her arm around her contented young daughter.  
Staring at the photo, she can no longer dwell on her wistful moments but instead focuses  
on the everlasting bond she had with her mother.

She rubs away the tears, studies the photo one last time, and curls her lips into a gentle smile.  
"I love you, Mom," she whispers to the silent room.

*No one can take a mother's place.*