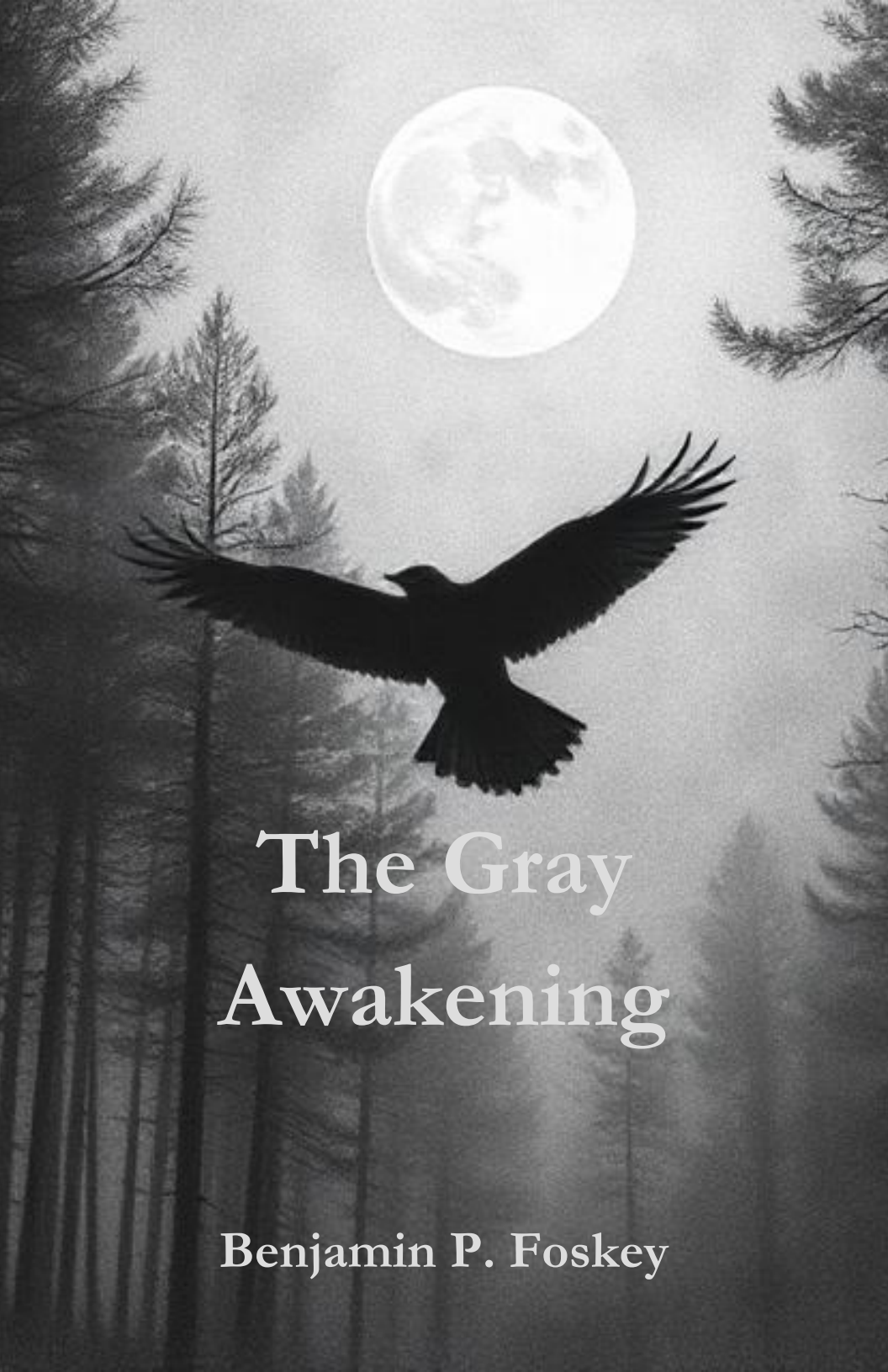




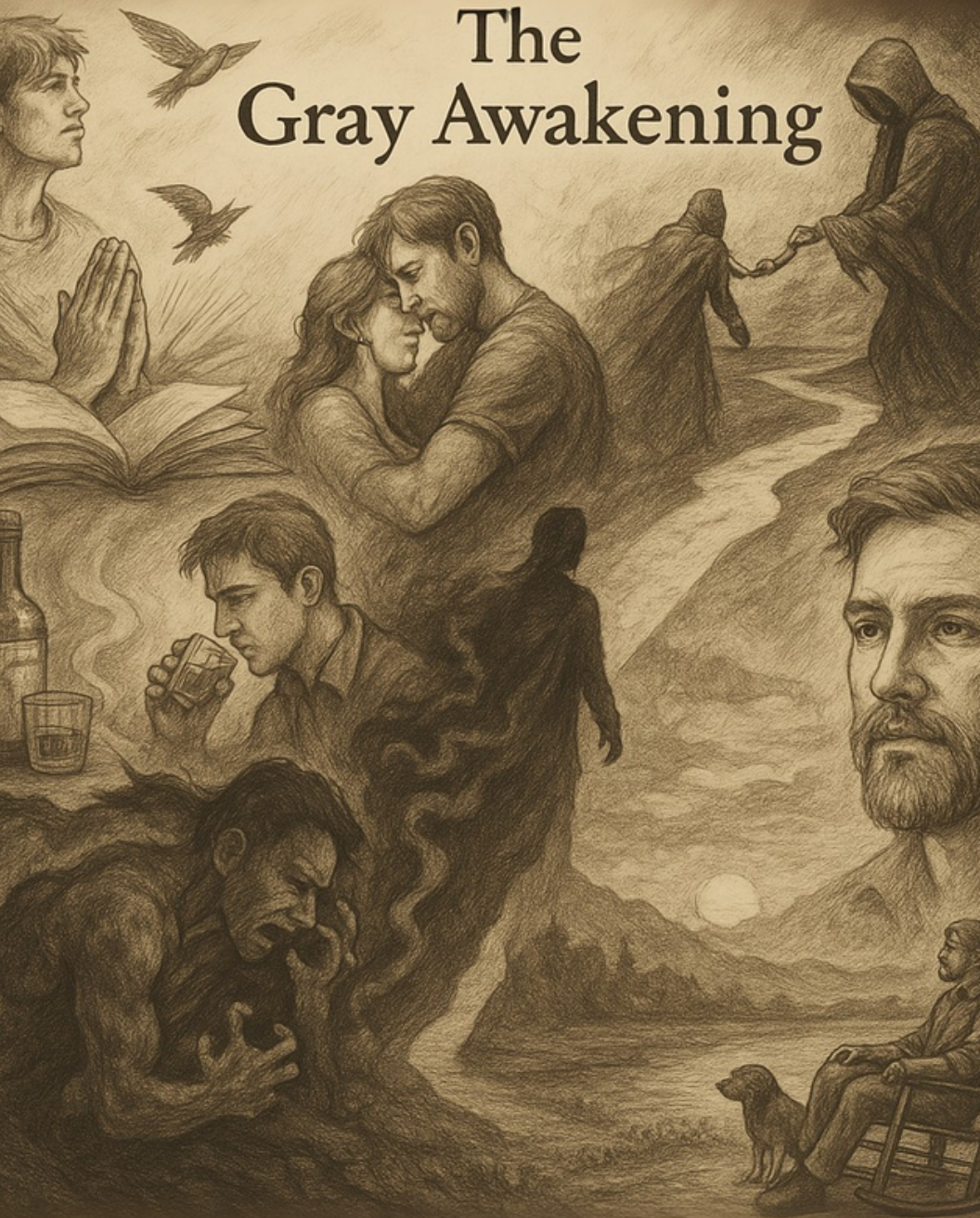
The Gray Awakening

Benjamin P. Foskey

"In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me, there lay
an invincible summer."

— Albert Camus

The Gray Awakening



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*Light a flame.
Say your name.
Breathe in truth.
Breathe out shame.
Come as you are.
Begin again —
with no blame.*

To the 14 year old who only knew black and white...

and parents that showed the gray...

A Letter to My Younger Self:

You were not born for a life of ease, and you already knew that.

You weren't chosen by bloodline, crowned by comfort, or wrapped in prophecy.

You came into this world half-shaped, raw and reaching, hungry for a truth no one could name for you.

And yet,

where others settled, you questioned.

Where others numbed, you felt.

Where others bowed, you broke.

And then, you rebuilt.

You turned your shadow into scripture, your ache into alignment.

Your confusion? A compass.

Your pain? A forge.

You did not find the path.

You burned it into being.

They named you,

but that name was only the seed,

you are what grew from its fire.

You wore too many masks to count:

—The dutiful son.

—The obedient soldier.

—The addict chasing anesthesia.

—The high-functioning collapse.

—The ghostbound lover.

—The builder of systems.

—The fox in the forge.

—The flame in the storm.

Each role, a reckoning.
Each identity, a trial by flame.
Each fall,
a death.
Each rise,
a reincarnation.
You thought greatness would arrive like a chariot.
It didn't.
It crawled out of silence,
with blood on its knuckles and your voice in its mouth. You did
not heal by escaping.
You healed by staying.
Staying when your hands trembled with destruction.
Staying when there was no applause, no rescue, no roadmap.
Staying when everything inside begged for disappearance. And
when the fire came, you didn't run.
You turned and said,
"Use me."
And it did.

It scorched away the false names.
It shattered the idols made of mirrors.
It burned off the illusions of worth and the fantasies of love.
And all that remained was you:
Unmasked.
Unashamed.
Unfinished, but unyielding.
You once chased love in the shape of your wounds.
Now you know:
Peace can be a partner.

Stillness can be strength.
You became wise not through study,
but through the sacred violence of survival.
You bled your way to truth.
You birthed and buried versions of yourself
no one even knew had died.

Now,

You walk with flame in your eyes
and stillness in your bones.
With a strategist's mind, a druid's soul,
from offices to bonfire, yoga to warpath,
you carve alignment into every step.

You are no longer chasing crowns.
You are etching legacy in the margins.
You are not just building systems,
You are building sanctuaries.
You are not just living a story,
You are becoming the myth.
And then came the sword.
You met one like you, but not.
He bore righteousness like armor,
truth like a blade.
And though you had once worn the same steel,
you saw it for what it was:
A weapon that cuts its wielder.
A creed that burns the heart it claims to cleanse.
He cried "Divine."

But the desert whispered otherwise.
Not all torches lead home.
Not all truths are clean.
Not every angel bears a halo,
some wear hollow wings.
You heard the silence after sacred blaze.
You watched thrones built on bones.
And still, you did not kneel.
You did not pray to power.
You became the desert itself,
the place where swords come home to die.
And now,
You carry nothing but what is real.
You build not from ego, but from alignment.
You love not from craving, but from wholeness.
You lead not with noise, but with knowing.
You are not the sword.
You are not the creed.
You are not the mask.
You are the firebearer.
This is not your beginning.
This is not your return.
This is your ongoing stage.
Where myth becomes man.
Where the fox becomes flame.
Where the flame becomes foundation.
Where the sacred awakens in the gray.

You are no longer searching.

You are claiming.

You are no longer surviving.

You are becoming.

You didn't escape the fire,

you became the bearer of it.

And your world better prepare for the bonfire to come.

—From The Man You Are Still Becoming

The Firebearer's Pathway

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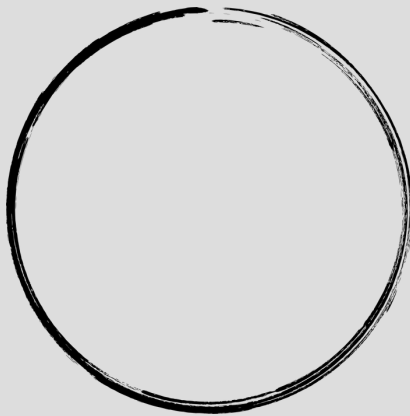
Ten Signs You May Have Over-Awakened

Things I've Learned That Are True (Unless They Aren't)

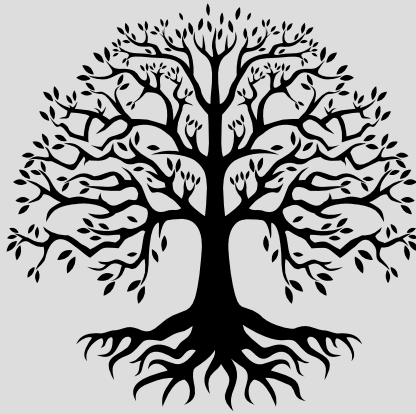
Final Note

Phase I

The Fracture



Learning Life



Where does truth rest,
if not in the quiet place beneath your questions?

It lies not in the noise,
nor in the answers shouted by the world,
but in the still, steady space within,
the space where your breath slows
and your heart speaks.

It lives where your reality begins to form,
not from what you're told,
but from what you choose to see,
to feel,
to believe.

Where peace abides,
truth follows,

not as a command,
but as a companion.
And where change waits,
it does not force its way in.
It coincides.
It whispers.
It offers.
But it never drags.
You must be the one to reach for it.
Because in the end,
no one else can walk this road for you.
You,
yes, you,
are the only one who can name the truth,
define your path,
carry your past,
and choose your becoming.
You are the master of your fate.
You are the captain of your soul.
So stand tall.
Set your sails.
And may the winds guide you kindly
across life's vast, uncertain sea.

Perception's Flight

How does one know reality?
Darkness cannot exist without light.
Right has no meaning without wrong.
And somewhere between the two,
between what is felt and what is feared,
reality flickers.
Life blurs the lines.
A word,
a wound,
a memory can pull the curtain,
leaving you gasping in the shadows of fight or flight.
How do I know what's real?
Good and bad melt into each other.
The truth becomes a lie
the moment it is believed too easily.
And a lie?
A lie can cradle you in comfort
until you call it home.
Step once more into awareness
and the ground shifts beneath you.
The world you thought you understood
folds in on itself,
and you're left with nothing but a question:
What does it mean to simply be?
How do you know reality?
Taste the rain before it falls.
Smell the pines
as if they've never grown before.

Watch the sky
melt into a fire of color.
Hear the birds
remind you that morning still matters.
Dream
until your hands ache from reaching,
and even then,
you'll find that reality bends,
Gently,
quietly,
around belief.
So
believe in yourself.
In your eyes,
your voice,
your wings.
Reality may be elusive,
but the courage to claim your perception,
to choose your vision,
is where truth begins to take shape.
And when it does,
let it lift you.
Fly.



Rise To Fall

I believed in beauty,
so deeply I mistook it for truth.
The sunset painted lies I wanted to hear.
Birdsong became a language of escape.
But even wings,
when flown too far from ground,
forget how to land.
The trees whispered freedom
until their branches broke,
bark split like my certainty,
bleeding sap and sorrow.
I once drank in color
like it was gospel.
But rainbows dissolve when chased.
Even the sky lies
in gradients.
What is perception,
but longing with direction?
And longing...
has teeth.
The truth?
Sometimes dark is just dark.
Sometimes wrong is just what it is.
Sometimes, no matter how hard you dream,
the silence does not answer back.
So I fall,
not down,
but in.

Into the ache beneath my need to see light,
into the grudge I kept like a prayer,
into the wound I called a mirror.

It is here,
in the hollow hush,
that I hear another truth
I once refused:
You can't forgive the world
until you forgive yourself.



Grace Embrace

I held the story
like a flame cupped in both hands,
too afraid to let go,
too burned to keep holding it.
They hurt me.
And I let that hurt
become a language
I spoke to myself in silence.
I didn't want revenge.
I wanted understanding.
But when it never came,
I started writing their apology
with my own healing.
Forgiveness isn't a gift.
It's a grave.
I buried the version of me
who kept waiting for the past
to make it right.
That doesn't mean it didn't happen.
It means it's done owning me.
So today,
I let it go.
Not because it was okay.
But because I deserve
to stop bleeding
from a wound someone else gave me.

I almost relapsed in a 711 gas station.

Not in a dramatic, crash-the-car, call-the-sponsor, fall-to-my-knees sort of way. No, this was the kind of spiritual warfare that happens under soul-killing fluorescent lights next to a beef jerky display.

I was there for gum. GUM. That was the mission.

But then, there it was. Bottom shelf. Plastic cap. Cheap whiskey. The kind that used to taste like courage and end in voicemail apologies. I swear it winked at me.

I stared at it like it owed me child support. My brain went into full negotiation mode.

Addict Brain:

"We've been good. Like... so good. Don't we deserve a little celebration?"

Higher Self:

"Celebration of what? Breathing?"

Addict Brain:

"Exactly."

Higher Self:

"Go get the gum."

I didn't move. I just stood there in front of that bottle like it was a long-lost ex I still followed on Instagram.

Eventually, I texted my buddy:

"Tell me a reason I shouldn't do something dumb."

He left me on read for 12 minutes. Twelve.

During that time, I paced the candy aisle, made awkward eye contact with a teenager buying Takis, and considered how poetic it would be to ruin my life again right there next to the Slim Jims.

But I didn't.

I bought a Reese's fast break, a pint of whole milk.

And windshield washer fluid.

Oh! And I didn't forget the mission accomplishing GUM.

That was it.

No angels. No voice from heaven. No sudden peace.

*Just a snack, a pack of mint gum and the growing realization that
sometimes sobriety is just choosing not to be too stupid in a gas station at
3:12 a.m.*

No applause. No trophy.

But that night?

That was holy.

Embrace Grace

I forgave them.
It wasn't easy,
but I gave the pain a name
and let it float downstream.
Still, the river kept rising.
Because the wound
was never just theirs.
I blamed myself for staying,
for bending until I broke,
for trying to turn silence
into a sanctuary.
I called my survival strength,
but it was just endurance,
and even that has limits.
I whispered grace to my past,
but my present still trembles
like it doesn't know
how to be held.
What happens
after forgiveness
when the ache doesn't leave?
When the ghost
isn't the memory,
but the craving that follows it?
I want to believe healing is linear.
I want to believe peace
won't come with a price.
But tonight,
I hear the old hunger humming,

a familiar warmth in its hands.

Not a monster.

A comfort.

A promise.

And suddenly...

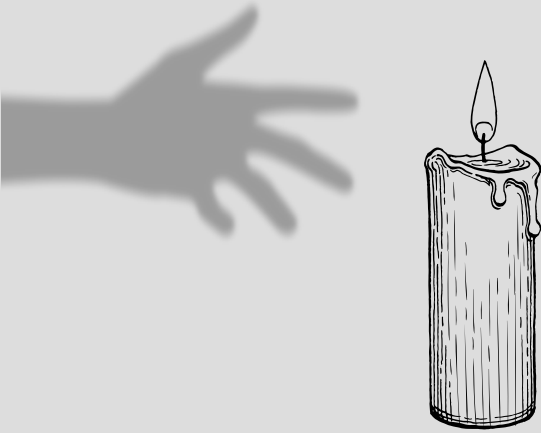
grace feels distant.

Like a language I forgot

mid-prayer.

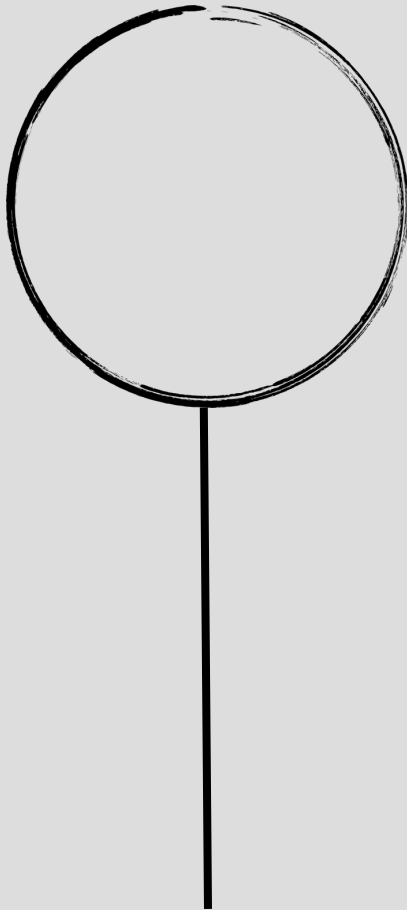
I forgive myself,

but still, I reach.



Phase II

The False Light



Chasing The Hollow

A dance with demons, pulse to beat,
The darkness pulls, makes me retreat.
The grip of hunger, sharp, complete,
It's the first taste, electric, sweet.

The rush, the high, alive, I fly,
It whispers peace, makes me deny.
But fleeting is the comfort, shy,
And soon I'm left with an aching sky.

The void grows deep, pulling me in,
Chasing the rush, I fall again.
It numbs the hurt, it quiets the din,
But addiction wears a crooked grin.

I crave the burn, the fleeting reprieve,
But it takes more than I'm willing to believe.
The loneliness, a constant weave,
A suffocating cloak I can't reprieve.

Round and round, I spiral deep,
I lose myself, no promises to keep.
The world fades to a hollow sweep,
Where shadows stir, and silence weeps.

The high is gone, but pain still here,
The need pulls close, sharp and clear.
Numb me, blind me, make it disappear,
But the hollow's voice is all I hear.

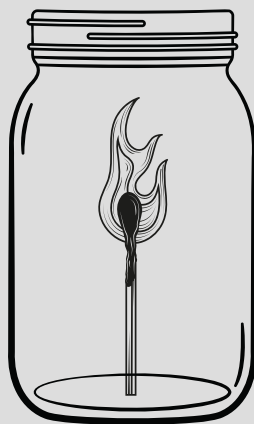
It's a cycle that never breaks,
Days and nights blur in its wake.
Fighting to breathe, fighting for the stakes,
To free myself from the chains it makes.



The Hollow Knows My Name

The quiet got teeth.
Not loud, not sharp,
just enough to
gnaw.
To tap behind the eyes
where memory and mercy
used to meet.
I kept a jar of names
I never spoke.
Labeled it “Almost.”
Buried it beneath
the grin I wear for mirrors
on days I forget I’m still pretending.
Somewhere between
the ache and the echo,
I started folding parts of myself
into corners of the room.
A shoulder here.
A prayer there.
Nothing big enough to miss,
just
small losses
that add up to
nobody.
I walked through hollow halls
with a map of who I was
in someone else’s handwriting.
Every turn I took
led me closer to the hum,

that low, constant hum
that sounded a lot
like
“leave.”
But I didn’t.
Not yet.
There’s a warmth
in the cold you know.
A safety
in the silence
that doesn’t ask questions.
But lately,
I’ve felt
a flicker.
Not hope,
something older.
Something that remembers
the version of me
who didn’t flinch at fire.
It’s not much.
But it’s
moving.
And I think
if I follow it
just a little longer,
I might finally learn
how to burn on
brighter.



I'd Be The Right Guy

In this desert,
sagebrush haunts every sight I see.
But still, I see the ocean's horizon.
The one I've been walking toward,
heart wide open,
the breath of an hour carrying a whole life.
The future feels close now,
close enough to touch.
I've washed ashore from lives I tried to build too soon,
from ships I burned to nothing.
It was fixed.
It was good...
It was solid?
And I didn't know how to stay.
Something broke me open,
not rage,
not fear,
but truth.
The kind that whispers,
You are not ready for what is sacred.
I wasn't.
I couldn't hold steady.
I needed to fall,
all the way down.
To spiral,
to meet the demons that held my voice hostage.
To learn how to say
what I never knew how to feel.
I was scared.
I was alone.

And somewhere in the falling,
something woke in me,
I didn't have a name for yet.
Soft.
Still.
Receiving.
The part that could sit in silence without fleeing.
The part that didn't need to conquer
to feel worthy of a place at the fire.
She had been buried
under years of armor.
I didn't know she was the strongest thing in me.
I became a light,
but only one that knows how to shine from the shadows.
Because she taught me that darkness
isn't the enemy of the sacred.
It's where the sacred lives.
And now,
I see you.
Not the way a man sees something he wants to take.
The way a man sees something and finally understands
what he's been becoming ready for.
Your laugh,
a song I don't want to forget.
Your smile,
a candle in a dark I know well.
Your faith,
your peace,
something I recognize,
because I've been learning to carry it too.

And I wonder sometimes if you felt it,
that quiet placement.

Like something finally makes sense.

I'm not here with wreckage in my hands.

I'm not here to burn this down.

I'm here barefoot,

breathless,

carrying the part of myself

I almost didn't survive long enough to find,

the tender,

burning part that knows how to stay now.

That wants to.

Always,

Me.



I tried to do breathwork the other day and accidentally unlocked a memory from 2005.

Like, I was just trying to calm my nervous system, not revisit the time I peed my pants at a scout event and blamed it on rain.

Anyway.

Healing is weird.

One minute you're meditating with rain sounds and imagining you're a forest monk.

The next minute, you're crying into your hoodie because someone looked at you funny at Trader Joe's.

I lit "candles" the other night and set off the smoke detector.

Which honestly felt on brand.

And have you ever tried to talk to your inner child?

Mine is pissed.

He keeps demanding peanut butter pancakes, validation, and a new Star Wars video game.

But hey,

I didn't drink.

I didn't spiral.

I just sat there, overcooked my eggs, and whispered,

"We're doing our best, bro."

And that?

That felt like progress.

One Drink

The bartender nods to slide me one more.

My finger raised, just one,
I'm done, Eyes pleading, half-sure.

The glass arrives,
amber dark,
a trickling burn;
spiced rum and cola hum,
liquid warmth returns.

Sip by sip,
the world softens and spins.

The 3 to my right,
reborn, a bold 7.

The fool to my left,
his nonsense profound,
how simple his wisdom,
each word a deep sound.

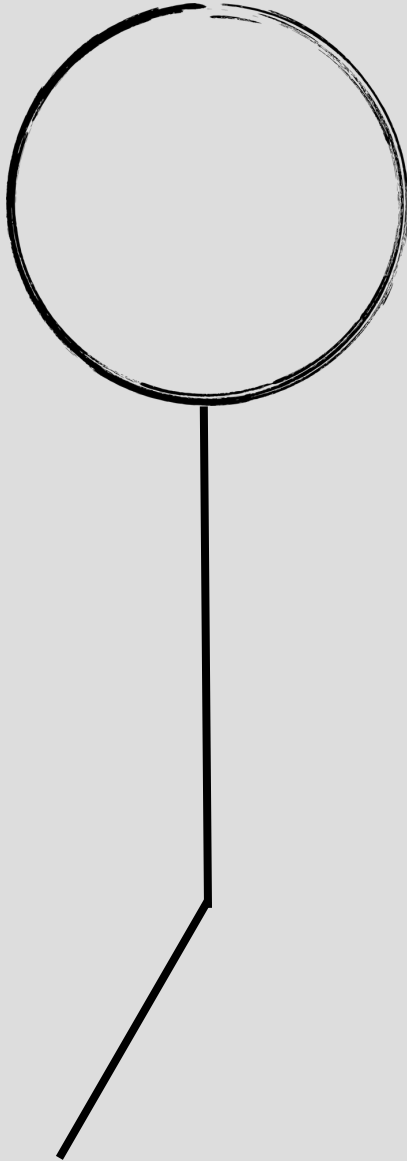
I drink to dissolve the sharp edges of day,
where grievances drown,
ghosts fade away.

One drink,
I promise,
though promises fray;
a pattern,
a ritual,
night easing to gray.

But here,
in this haze,
all wrongs blur to right,
and the glass is my compass,
no end yet in sight...

Phase III

The Fall and The Fire



She Who Stays

I cradle you in rusted gold,
warmth that whispers, "Come unfold."
My arms are bottles, soft and wide,
I rock your ache, no need to hide.

When the world won't speak your name,
I sip your sorrow, blur your blame.
I hold your breath in amber glass,
a gentler mother than your past.

You look for truth? I offer sleep,
a silence thick, a calm so deep.
You beg for love? I draw you near,
a kiss of fire, a touch sincere.

I know the child behind your fight,
who starved for peace, not the darkness of night.
You call me poison, curse, regret,
but I'm the first who never left.

I stay when prayers dissolve to air.
I warm your wounds, I stroke your hair.
You built your temples in my name,
don't weep now, love, we're just the same.

But even I can't stop the flame
that burns to leave this house of shame.
I see it now, your rising soul.
And though I lose, you will be whole.

The Demon Within

In the hush of night,
when the stars held their breath,
I glimpsed a figure,
a whisper of death.
It followed like smoke,
just out of reach,
a presence that clung,
a lesson to teach.
It smiled with a voice
too close to mine:
“You cannot outrun
what you’ve let define.”
I ran. I begged. I tried to forget,
but it fed on the guilt,
on the quiet regret.
It was not a stranger,
nor devil, nor ghost,
but a part of me
I feared the most.
I saw its eyes,
they mirrored pain,
the buried grief,
the rusted chain.
To flee was futile.
To fight, too thin.
The only way out
was to let it in.
So I stood.

Bare.

Shaken.

Still.

I faced my shadow
on that cold, dark hill.

No sword, no spell,
just breath and will.

And there in silence,
it bent, went still.

It cracked, then faded,
into the wind.

The weight I bore,
released from within.

No longer haunted.

No need to flee.

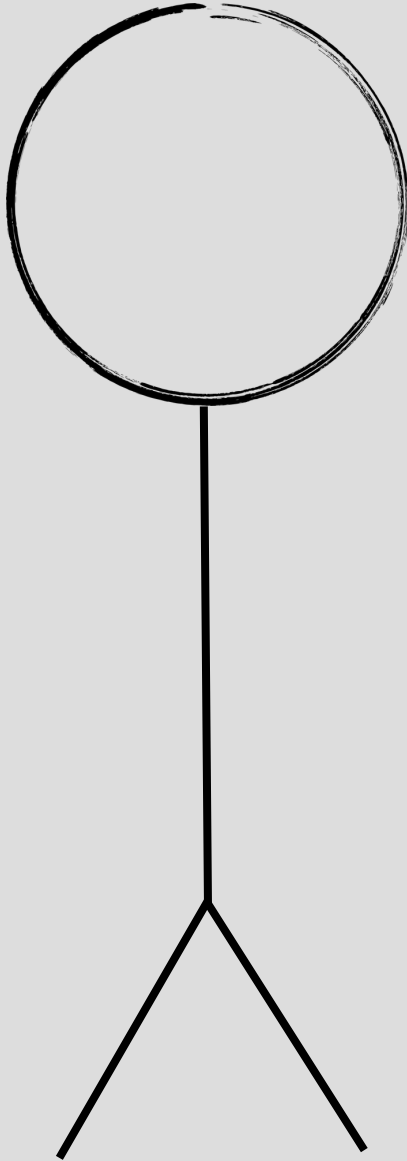
I became the one
who set me free.

As Within, So Without

I saw you fight him on the hill,
bare-chested, breathless, broken, yet still.
You named the beast and bore the flame,
yet whispered still, "I am the same."
You think I turned as shadows grew,
but I was there, inside of you.
Not in your fists or fractured cries,
but in the silence that survives.
I was the voice you couldn't trust,
the part of you that gathers dust.
I held the line when rage took reign,
the stillness underneath the pain.
You feared my calm, my quiet eyes,
called me the echo of your lies.
But strength, my love, is not a scream;
it's knowing when to lose the dream.
The boy you buried with your fists
still sings in every slit of his wrists.
But even now, I see him bend,
his voice becoming a path to mend.
And so I wait, not far, not near,
just where you'll turn when shame is clear.
Not a demon, not a ghost, not an end,
I am the one
you meet...again

Phase IV

The Return to the Garden



A Path To Mend

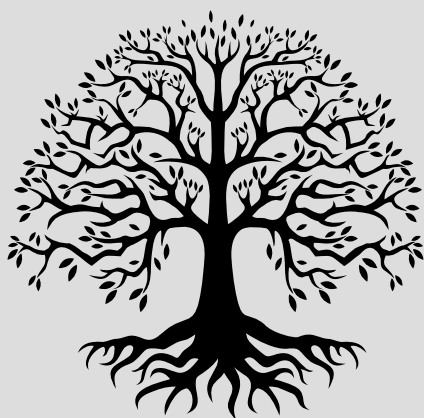
I long to reach out,
to feel you're well,
my kin,
my family,
who held me when I fell.

You were there through the dark,
past what none could see,
the path I chose,
steadfast,
in search of being free.

Oh me, oh my,
my brother-
lost to time,
is love past fate,
or can it climb
beyond regret,
to meet the dawn,
to mend the hurts
our past has drawn?

I wish to tell you the stories I've kept,
to sit by your side where memories slept,
to speak of trials,
truths concealed,
to cry for wounds that never healed.
Just one moment,
one breath,

to break the pall.
Until that day,
I'll guard my wall.



Veins of Light

You touched the scar and did not flinch,
the wound no longer owned the pinch.

You didn't beg the past to stay,
but knelt beside it anyway.

Your hands, once clenched, now gather ash,
the remnants of that final crash.

Not to rebuild what broke apart,
but plant what rises from the heart.

Forgiveness isn't loud or clean,
it slips in cracks, grows soft between.

It speaks in tremors, hums in bones,
makes holy things from shattered tones.

You walked through doors you sealed with shame,
called every ghost by their true name.

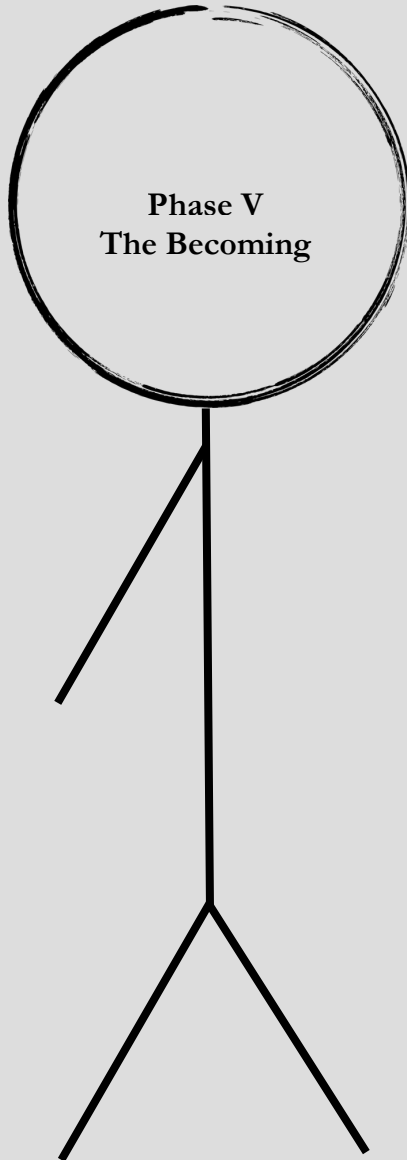
And in the mirror, not a fight,
but just a boy who found his light.

Not perfect, no, but strangely whole,
a garden growing from a hole.

The gray, the grief, the wrong, the right,
each thread now woven
veins of light.

And now,
the music starts to swell,
not victory, but something fell,
the weight, the war, the voice of lack...

You do not chase becoming now,
you simply
don't look
back.



Ballad Of Becoming

My mind beats the drum of an old Viking hymnal,
not a rhythm, but a war cry.

A cry from within the marrow,
where ancestral chants claw at the gray chambers of my skull,
as if my thoughts march to a battle no one else can see.

And yet, my body rests.

Still.

Rocking gently on the wraparound porch,
soaked in the gold of a southern sunset.

A loyal dog paces at my feet,
green pines standing like sentinels,
ready to guard me from a war that doesn't come.

This is the paradox.

This is the battlefield.

This is the war of my mind.

I speak in poems and symbols
because plain words would flatten the matchless weight of what
I feel.

To name the storm
would steal its thunder.

It moves in me
like a wildfire-
that's memorized every tree through my chest.

Yesterday still bites at my heels.
Tomorrow, glows distant and dull,
like a lighthouse without a bulb.

And today?

Today crawls in quietly,
unpacks its bags,
and calls itself home.

It wears the face of fear.
Not the kind that shouts in the dark,
but the kind that learns your name.

Fear of failing.
Fear of moving.
Fear of loving wrong,
of being seen,
of being sent away.

And why fear?
Because it stays.
Because it knows the door codes.
Because it doesn't run out,
just runs deeper.

See, I'm not here because of coincidence.

I'm here because I chose to be.

But what if I chose differently?

What if I stepped off this road?

The one that feeds fear,
stifles joy,
and numbs the man I'm becoming?

Maybe the real test isn't how long I can endure...
but how willing I am to stop pretending endurance is the same
as strength.

Because I've fought too long to find myself
to lose him now by staying still.

But I'm scared.

Not just of leaving,
but of what leaving might mean.
The family, who helped rebuild me.
Would leaving feel like betrayal?
Like striking the match
that burns the bridge that saved me?
But maybe,
just maybe,
Leaving isn't betrayal at all.
Maybe leaving is the proof that their love worked.
They didn't just offer me a place to rest,
they gave me the space to rise.
And now that I'm rising,
I hear the call.
Home.
Not just four walls,
but the echo of legacy in my father's laugh.
The iron in my brother's grip.
The stories behind my grandfather's wisdom.
My uncles, discussing business like it's gospel.
The land,
how it still whispers my name.
I don't want to go back
because I'm lost.
I want to go back
because I'm ready.
To open doors with both hands.
To sit at the table
not as a boy in need of answers,
but as a man who's bringing vision.

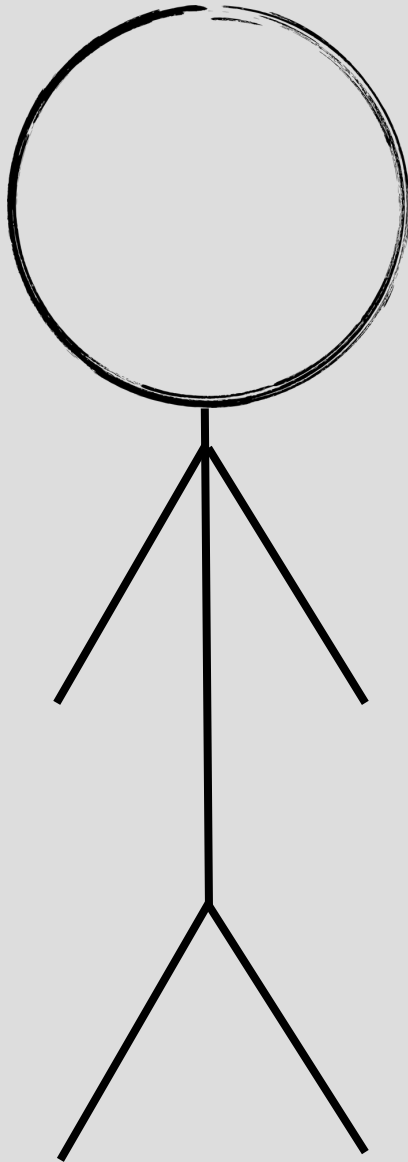
To love.
To be loved.
To wake up, excited again.
Redemption.
Forgiveness.
Freedom.
I want to let them wreck and consume me,
because maybe wreckage is where real beginnings live.
So I'll go.
Not as a runaway,
but as a return.
I'll honor the chapter they wrote in me
with every breath I take moving forward.
They were my cocoon.
But now...
The wings are stirring.
This isn't an escape.
This is an emergence.
And I'm not asking if I can go.
I'm saying, it's time.





Phase Gate

Initiation Meets Integration



*I thought being “aligned” would mean I stopped doing dumb shit.
Like maybe once I found peace, I’d stop screaming at inanimate objects
because they attacked me (damn legos) or stop facebook stalking the girl I
ghosted last fall who now sells handmade candles and talks about “she
don’t need no mans” in every caption.*

But no.

*Alignment, as it turns out, just means I notice the dumb shit faster.
It means I still wake up bloated, existential, and two days late on emails,
but now I light incense before dissociating.*

*It means I still sometimes text “you up?” and then unsend it like I was
possessed.*

*It means I journaled this morning about “choosing peace” and then flipped
someone off in traffic because they didn’t wave when I let them merge.*

(No gratitude? Come on man, That’s a spiritual crime. I’m justified.)

So yeah, I’m aligned.

I mean, I still talk to my plants like they’re disappointed in me.

And I still haven’t caught up on my taxes.

*But I haven’t blown up my life in at least four full moons, and that has to
count for something.*

Anyway,

*If enlightenment shows up, I’ll be the guy in the corner eating gluten-free
seaweed chips and pretending he knows what “non-duality” means.*

Return to Alignment

I have died a dozen deaths.
Not in body,
but in names I no longer answer.
The boy who bent to please.
The soldier who obeyed without question.
The addict who danced with oblivion.
The lover who mistook ache for affection.
The friend who couldn't say goodbye.
The hustler who built towers from fear.
The poet who only wrote in pain.
The coach who forgot to rest.
The builder who thought control was safety.
The seeker who chased gods and ghosts.
The son who swallowed silence.
The man who mistook motion for meaning.
Each one died on a different battlefield,
some in rooms with no windows,
others in mirror-light confession.
I buried them in notebooks,
in burned bridges,
in rituals no one saw but me.
But I did not mourn them all.
Some I celebrated.
Some I still visit.
They are not gone.
They are threads in my fire.
They are roots beneath the house I now build.
Because I learned,
death is not destruction,

It is refinement.
And every time I died,
I came back sharper, softer,
more dangerous
and more free.
Not a phoenix.
Not reborn.
Just more me
than I ever was before.

One More Truth

Let it be known,
I do not come bearing answers,
only the invocation of a question:

Will you wake up?

My aim is not to lead, but to ignite;
to be a catalyst
in the inward journey of your becoming,
to light the lantern
and leave the path to your own discernment.

What follows is not instruction,
it is invitation.

Across the great ocean of life,
you will drift,
you will anchor,
you will be caught in storms not of your making.

And yet, at every turn,
you will be met with the same haunting inquiry:

What is **Truth**?

And perhaps more urgently:

How is one to live in alignment with Truth,
in pursuit of a good life?

This question has shaped civilizations,
driven revolutions,
built and broken entire religions.

It is the silent architect behind every law,
every war,
every act of love and loss.

For Truth is not merely information,
it is the character of reality itself.

And reality, my friend, is a living mosaic:
physical,
perceptual,
consensual,
metaphysical.

It is not one thing, but many.
It is not possessed, but perceived.
No single mind can hold the entirety of it,
yet all minds contribute to its form.

Reality is not perspective,
but the culmination of all perspectives.

And to step into another's view
without ego or fear
is to practice empathy:
the great bridge between worlds.

Empathy gives shape to wisdom.
Wisdom, then, is not just knowledge,
it is tested knowledge.

It is the tempered steel
forged in the fires of experience,
guided by the discerning eye
that sees patterns in chaos
and meaning in madness.

Discernment is not the act of judgment,
It is the art of seeing truly.

And so we ask again:

What is **Truth**?

Truth is empathy, led by wisdom,
walking beside discernment,
all anchored
in the quiet power of presence.

It is not found in shouts or scripture alone,
but in stillness,
in silence,
in the ability to see what is,
not what we wish to be.

But how can we ever know the world,
when we do not know ourselves?

The trinity of self,
body,
mind,
spirit,
must be brought into communion.

What we consume becomes us:
nourish the vessel, with clean natural substances,
nourish the mind, with stimulating & insightful material
nourish the spirit, with wholesome, uplifting programming.

Harmony is not a mystic state;
it is a *lived truth*.

All things must align.

Your thoughts have frequency.

Your emotions vibrate.

You are not merely reacting to life,
you are tuning it.

Perception becomes reality
because attention becomes embodiment.

The harsh truth is this:
your life is what it is
because on some level,
conscious or not,
you have chosen it.

But that also means,
you can choose again.

The past is not a prison;
it is a path.

But the person you were then
is not the person you are now.

With wisdom,
discernment,
and empathy,

you are no longer that wounded child
staring out the window of your own mind.

You are the architect now.

You hold the brush
to paint your next reality.

But you must match frequency with desire.
Otherwise,
your dreams are not visions,
they are escapes.

When you begin to align your thoughts with your actions,
your energy with your intent,
your emotions with your truth,
then the tides shift.

Then you remember what it is to change.
Then fate is no longer a chain,
but a current.

I too was once there.

Buried in pain I thought I deserved.

Cloaked in trauma I wore like armor.

I was addicted not just to substances,
but to suffering.

I called it identity.

I called it fate.

I sang sad songs and thought them sacred.

But no amount of pity will build a future.

No amount of pain will polish the soul
unless you **choose** to see it as refining fire.

And so I did.

Slowly.

Painfully.

Truthfully.

I looked inward.

I saw my demons,
and I stopped calling them friends.

I held my ego to the fire
and let it scream
until it softened.

Where does truth rest,
if not in the quiet place beneath your questions?
It lies not in the noise,
nor in the answers shouted by the world,
but in the still, steady space within,
the space where your breath slows
and your heart speaks.

It lives where your reality begins to form,
not from what you're told,
but from what you choose to see,
to feel,
to believe.

Where peace abides,
truth follows,
not as a command,
but as a companion.

And where change waits,
it does not force its way in.

It coincides.

It whispers.

It offers.

But it never drags.

You must be the one to reach for it.

Because in the end,
no one else can walk this road for you.

You,

yes, you,

are the only one who can name your truth,
define your path, carry your past,
and choose your becoming.

You are the master of your fate.
You are the captain of your soul.

So stand tall.

Set your sails.

And may the winds guide you kindly across life's vast, uncertain
sea.



Epilogue: Field Notes

(For those of us who took awakening a little too seriously...)

Ten Signs You May Have Over-Awakened

- *You referred to your third failed “talking stage” as a karmic contract cursing you from getting the girl. (Probably was though).*
 - *You saged your car before a date... but didn’t clean the inside. (Those buffalo wings with bleu cheese from two nights ago smells great by the way. At least the bad voodoo is gone.)*
 - *You tried to manifest emotional stability by writing it on a sticky note and taping it to your forehead. (Tik-tok said it would work though...)*
 - *You cried in yoga, not from the trauma release, but because your hips lied to you. (Sorry Shakira, these hips do lie.)*
 - *You told your barista you were “choosing suffering today” and ordered a triple espresso on an empty stomach. (Breakfast of champions.)*
 - *You turned down a party to sit alone in candlelight and “integrate with yourself.” (Sad boi hours.)*
 - *You had a panic attack because Starburst has red dye and now you're convinced you're going to get cancer and die. (You will, don't worry; somehow, someday, probably not from that though).*
 - *You told someone you were “transmuting pain,” but you were actually just ghosting them. (I've got nothing snarky, i'm just guilty of this.)*
 - *You wrote an 80-page poetic self-exorcism instead of going to therapy. (I feel great though)*
 - *You're still not sure if you healed... or just got better at writing about not being okay. (No, like really, i'm fine.)*
-

Things I've Learned That Are Probably True (Unless They Aren't)

- *Your ego will pretend to be your higher self if it gets lonely enough. (Or because it's the best, obviously.)*
 - *Stillness is great until your trauma shows up with popcorn while watching a movie. (At least be watching Lord of the Rings or something good.)*
 - *You can't rush healing, but you can absolutely get mani-pedis and sushi with your sister and pretend everything's okay. (Or Tapas for you allergy ridden folk).*
 - *Enlightenment feels a lot like laundry. (Laundry is my least favorite chore, by the way. Takes too damn long and you **have** to do it or everything smells like shit.)*
 - *No amount of journaling will save you if you're not drinking water.*
 - *Sometimes self-care is a bubble bath.*
 - *Sometimes it's firing your dealer.*
 - *Sometimes it's telling your inner child to go to bed because you're exhausted and the adults have work in the morning.*
-

Final Note

You may still feel like a mess.

That's fine. Mess is sacred.

You may still crave things that are bad for you.

So does everyone who's ever known shadow.

You may not know what to do next.

Good.

No, actually, that's fan-fucking-tastic.

Because now you're listening.

Not to the noise. Not to the flames.

But to the quiet thing beneath it all.

That still, whispering place within you,

"The sacred doesn't arrive with thunder.

It taps lightly.

And waits for you to answer without pretending."

Welcome, friend.

To The Gray.

To the becoming.

To the absurd, holy, tragic, hilarious shitshow that is waking up.

You're not late.

You're not broken.

You're just on fire.

Now, Burn, baby, Burn.

Acknowledgements

There are names woven into every page of this book, all invisible. Rather than list every single person, I want to especially acknowledge those who've stayed through more than just a season of my life. For that, I hold immense gratitude and appreciation.

To my parents, Sara and Drew, I could not be the man I am today without you. Through every high, low, and sideways detour, maybe even across dimensions, you both lit lanterns that helped me find my own way. Thank you.

To my grandparents, Dewayne, Kathy, Don, and Terrie, I pray you find your legacy in these words and feel the presence of your traditions carried forward. Thank you for your examples.

To my siblings, Emily and Colin, thank you for always making sure "nothing was gonna harm me." Dallin and Carly, I'm proud to witness you both grow and excel in ways I never quite have been able to. Thank you for your examples.

To my dearest friends, the Heaton Family and the Ender Family, your love, kindness, and unwavering compassion gave me the safety to write this in the first place. You gave me home when I felt I had none. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

And finally, to a man I once called father, brother, friend, Matthew A. Gellis, this entire book exists because of the traumatic impact of your actions. So... thanks a lot, asshole.

With every page, I've left behind an old version of myself.

To those who walked beside me, thank you.

To those who walked away, thank you more.

—Benjamin Foskey

Keep Walking Through Doors...

About The Author

Benjamin is a writer shaped by consequence. A former Marine, a man in recovery, and someone who's lost enough to learn what's worth keeping. His words don't perform. They come from the bone, written not in theory, but from the hard-won clarity of survival.

His voice carries the weight of conflict, internal, relational, and chemical. He writes for those still searching: for meaning, for truth, for something steady in a world that doesn't stop spinning. *The Gray Awakening* is his first published collection, a hand reaching out from the edge, written for anyone who's ever stood there wondering if it's too late.

He's been many things: a brother, a son, a soldier, a shadow, and a man trying to stay good without a clear path.

If one of these poems feels like it's about you... maybe it is.

Or maybe it's just a reflection.

Either way, you're not alone anymore.

Back Cover Synopsis

The Gray Awakening is a modern poetic epic , a lyrical, vulnerable, and soul-striking journey through the fire of addiction, grief, masculinity, love, and eventual resurrection. Structured in seven total “phases”, this collection of interconnected poems and poetic essays chronicles the author’s descent into shadow and his climb toward spiritual alignment.

Each phase captures a stage of becoming: from loss and reckoning to reunion with self. With a mix of mythic metaphor, humorous self-awareness, and sacred honesty, The Gray Awakening explores the grief of unspoken truths, the fire of inner healing, and the quiet power of reclaiming one’s soul.

This is not a story of rescue, it is a reckoning. It does not offer answers, but a mirror, for those brave enough to face their own Gray Awakening.