

How do you tell your mother that sometimes you can't answer her call, not because you were busy or didn't hear the phone ring, but because sometimes you just can't.

You want to tell her that you're sorry for always being caught between emotions you've stopped trying to understand.

That sometimes even God isn't as close as he claims to be and you have no energy to walk toward or look for him.

That sometimes you think maybe your mum was right when she said your dark days are because you refuse to accept religion, even though you told her that doesn't translate to rejecting God.

How do you tell your mother that most days you cry because there's a little child who died in a movie and the world suddenly looks like a silhouette of death. You see their endless suffering on the glaring walls of social media and the quick streets of the city you live in. You are sad for the child's death, for their family and friends.

That most days you don't know who you are and have a hard time believing you'll ever find a place in your own life.

That sometimes when mum calls, you wipe your tears as if she'll see them through the phone. You sip water and put on the boldest voice for her because you're afraid of saying I am fine if she asks. When she questions you, the complexity of your emotions requires a mathematical formula that hasn't yet been discovered.

That sometimes your voice leaves your tongue and migrates to your head. When that happens, it changes from the sparkling laughter and fueling courage everyone is familiar with to an unsteady, inconsiderate colonizer that penetrates every fiber of your good days to create a planet of impossibilities.

That when you hang up on your mom with a quick *Call you right back*, you're waiting for your despair to dissolve into solid enthusiasm and, you know, that takes time and effort, which on some days you lack.

That you often apologize to her and to yourself when her calls go unanswered, telling the universe that when you have finally faced yourself, you'll be ready to face her, and you will answer.

You will talk to your mum when your voice returns once more to your tongue.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Munira Hussein is a Kenyan writer and author. She pursued a BS of Microbiology at Kenyatta University before fully delving into writing. She has authored two books, *Unfit for Society* and *A Curve of Darkness*. In addition, she has co-authored seven books, including English literacy textbooks published by Longonhorn Publishers and *Journey of Hope*, a poetry anthology by the Writers Guild of Kenya.

Her short story "Powder in the Wind" was shortlisted for the African Writers Award in 2018.

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Laura Chow Reeve is queer mixed Chinese femme writing and drawing in Richmond, VA. She is a co-organizer of, and contributor to, the *Color out Cash Bail* coloring book and political education resource. Reeve is the winner of the 2017 PEN/Robert J. Dau Short Story Prize for Emerging Writers, and is a Senior Editor at *Joyland Magazine*.

Laura is currently writing a novel, studying about transformative justice practices, dreaming about abolitionist futures, and supporting movement organizations through graphic recording.

You can find more of her work at laurachowfun.com and radicalroadmaps.com.

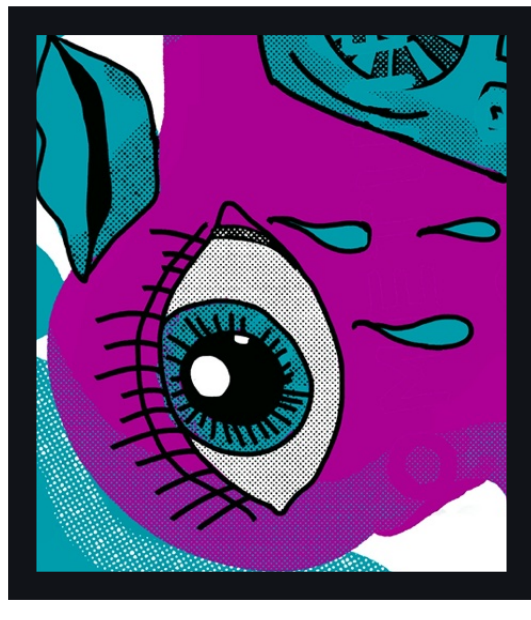
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Munira Hussein,
"Rendered Speechless"

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