

Yellow

Clarisse Lim Yong Yi

Yellow. A yellow sun, yellow skies, yellow flowers. A bright vibrant colour, one that the world assigns happiness to. But not me. All my life, I've been running from it, hiding from this wretched colour that destroyed my life. Refusing to face it.

Why should I? Yellow was the colour of my pill. A pill that I had to take since I was two years old. But it was never my childhood friend. It was an enemy that induced nausea and trauma to my body. Trauma so ingrained into my being, that now I can't even wake up on Sunday – a day of rest, the mark of a new beginning – without tearing my mind apart thinking of the horrors of what was sure to come that week.

The fated medicine day was never fixed. Sometimes it would be Monday, sometimes Tuesday, and sometimes even my favourite day – Saturday. And just like that, I had no more favourite days, they were all ruined. They became days of fear. Gut-wrenching, heart pulling, mind-destroying fear. I would shake and beg when my mother brought that wretched thing to my lips, coaxing me to eat it. I would kick and scream, then my mother would tell me, 'Clarisse, please be a good girl and pop the pills in your mouth. The sooner you do this, the quicker it'll be over. I know it's painful, but it's only for a day.' I loved my mum, so I always did what she told me. I knew she was lying, it was never 'just a day', it was the whole week. If I took it on Monday, I would feel the effects until Thursday, it would become bearable on Friday, and finally leave on Saturday. And then it was Sunday, and how could I ever rest, when I knew what was coming tomorrow? So, as I became more rebellious, her coaxing soon turned to threats, and the venom that seeped from my mother's mouth, stuck to yellow.

I was so young, only eight. Eight, and already begging God to let me die, to release me from this chain that had scarred me beyond repair. At twelve, I was dragging myself through each day, the will to stay alive slowly dimming with each pill that passed my oesophagus. I wanted to die, I wanted to do that which God would not do to me. I wanted to kill myself. Many times I almost did, but the fear of hell kept me at bay. So I settled for screaming out at God each night, hoping my sobs were loud enough for him to hear.

But he stayed silent. No answer, no revelation, no sign of hope. So I moved on by myself.

Red. Like the blood and anger that mixes in my veins. The blood, which tries so hard to keep me alive, while untameable anger tears down its every solution. Together they taint me, deeper than I could ever reach to clean. But I don't want this! I don't want to be someone who lashes out at everything. I'm a Christian, for God's sake! So why won't it stop? Why am I stumbling around in this foggy mist, when the direction is so clear? Why. Can't. I. Calm. Down? Now, anger settles and makes its home in my body. It fuels my sickness, releasing hormones that trigger my arthritis' ever-expanding domain. I wish I could stop it. I want to regain control. But it has cut too deep. It bleeds into my eyes. And now, when I try to see things objectively, all I can see is red.

Red, triggering my sickness, taking its energy from the very immune system that keeps me alive. Making me angry. Making me red. At myself, for not trying harder. Red, at my parents, because they have passed this on to me. Red, at God. Because he let me turn out this way. Because he stood by while I was fearfully and wonderfully made? He heard my cries and prayers, yet he stayed silent. No answer, no revelation, no hope.

So I tended to myself.

Black. Signifying the end of growth and the end of hope. I felt broken and depressed. My energy was drained, it stayed at a constant low no matter what time of day. I dreamt dreamless dreams, and when there was the rare occasion of a moving picture in my sleep, it would always be one of me dancing, singing, and running with joy. It was a slap in my face, a reminder that I was not, and never would be 'normal'. I used to try and fight these allegations. I pushed myself past limits my mother told me to obey. I rebelled against every restriction, only to be met with defeat when I inevitably collapsed under the stress I strained on myself. Then I would look at myself in the mirror. A voice in my head mumbling, 'We should really get this mirror fixed. It's cracking everywhere'. And I would look closer, only to see that my reflection was the cause. Then I would watch as the tears cascaded down my face.

Every week, the same lecture. My mother berating me once again about avoiding my medicine, and not listening to my body. Ha, what would she know about my body? What would she know about keeping a puke bag by my side at all times? What could she understand about being left out of chasing, climbing, and dancing

games? Does she care about the gaping hole in my heart that gets bigger with every phone call she makes to my teacher, telling her I will not be participating in that week's special activity, because it is too strenuous? No, she does not. Because every time I speak up, she dismisses me and degrades my suffering.

Now I had reached my highest potential. I scaled this mountain of obstacles as high as I could using every advantage, driven by my hatred and hopelessness. Even after all I had gone through, I still naively thought, if I could just reach the summit, I would see the plan God had devised for me! But, as I neared the top, my body locked itself. Look at me! I am sixteen years old, yet I look like a child.

It was black, like a cage. Cold. Damp. Immovable. When I stopped growing, I stopped climbing. There was no more path. I sat on a little rock ledge under the black sky, my leg dangling over the side. Was this the end? Were all my struggles for nought? Did I come all this way... simply for the path to disappear? When will my suffering end?! When will happiness finally begin?

As I sat there through black darkness, red rose through the sky and turned to yellow. I shied away, my fear prompting me to retreat. But it grew closer, and turned to gold. Gold! What a beautiful colour. It was a colour of wellness and riches and honour and righteousness and... hope. But years of trauma had left me scarred. I would not trust so easily. For all I knew, this could be fool's gold. I could not, would not, set myself up for disappointment. Then a silhouette stepped out. He was clothed in yellow silk, red blood dripping down his sides, a crown of black thorns nestled at his forehead. But his face, his face radiated a sense of security, understanding, and a longing to help me. He stepped forward and I did not cower. I reached out. The One whose love is gold lifted me off my ledge. He carried me in his arms. And trod where there was no path.

As I surrendered into his safe embrace, I received the answers, the revelation, and I received hope. Hope, like when I sat on the floor, the blade tossed aside, because I realised the good must come after the bad. Hope, like when I spilled my heart out to my teacher, and he told me I was just hurt, not broken. Hope, like when I woke from my far-fetched dreams, determined to make it a reality.

'Walk by faith, and not by sight.' This whole time, I had kept my eyes open to see my path. To try and see him. But if I had just walked by faith, I would have understood. He kept silent because I gave him no space to speak. He couldn't help me because I never looked away from my path, to see his outstretched hand. I

believe a part of me wanted to stay 'strong', to show I wasn't as helpless as everyone says. Because of that, I only managed to see him when I was at my lowest, because I was too weak to reject his help, and too quiet to drown out his voice. So, when you think God has deserted you, lift up your eyes, be still, and know that he was there. All along.