

silence between the sirens

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poetry and inner wanderings

by Tristan De Pauw

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- moon songs (2022), Gent, Brave New Books
- midnight gospels (2024), Gent, Brave New Books

my music

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all poems are written by Tristan De Pauw
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dedicated to all the past versions of myself

*“I found that things became a lot easier when I no longer expected to win.
You abandon your masterpiece and sink into the real masterpiece.”*

— Leonard Cohen

PREFACE

Dear reader,

Welcome to these lines. Welcome to my poems, my observations and inner wanderings.

The book you're holding in your hands is the result of a year of intensive writing and re-writing, of going through the many pathways of the self. An experiment, a shedding and becoming. A book of death and rebirth. It's a record of me trying to find my true authentic voice. An inner landscape wherein I'm trying to find out who I truly am, while examining the craft of writing.

I always felt like I had something to share. A burning fire in my chest. Ever since 2014 I have tried to alchemize that burning ember into something. At first, it was a way of coping with the world and the dense field of emotions that arose in me. Call it therapy on a page, or necessary sighs expressed in ink.

I wrote occasionally, when I felt like it, when I had the time for it. I didn't consider myself a writer, because I didn't have the discipline and I had the strong (limiting) idea that I couldn't be a writer because I wasn't educated enough or qualified for it. But I kept on writing for myself. Little skeleton trees on loose sheets, minimal and stripped down to the essence, trying to understand my own inner world.

Then in 2016 I met Quinten De Coene, a painter and a poet, who took interest in my work and encouraged me to publish my words. So in that same year I auto-published my first book called '*Riante Ruïnes*'. From that moment on I started taking my writing more seriously and published a book every two years. Every book, a completion of a chapter in my life, a period of grief. It became a rhythm that kept me going. That kept me growing. Now it's 2025 and I am about to publish my 7th volume of poetry.

After I published '*Moon Songs*' and '*Midnight Gospels*' in 2023, I felt stuck. Went through some deep transformations. A long existential crisis, if you will. My anxiety skyrocketed and everything I feared and suppressed came up to be seen and felt. I felt very much like an imposter. Still, I felt this deep urge to write, but my well was dry and my ink was too thin. I went through something called 'an awakening', a long inner journey where everything I thought I knew didn't make sense anymore...and crumbled. I embarked on a deep inner journey of soul-searching, where I learnt to sit with my darkness, where I went through all the possible rabbit holes of myself. A long tunnel into the void.

But during this months of slow-dancing with myself, of shedding and releasing, I discovered a whole new well. I tapped into something bigger. That urge, that inner fire to write, became stronger and stronger and it pushed me to take things to another level.

So in March 2025 I started to write every single day. No matter the conditions I was in. I wanted to hold myself accountable for crafting my skill, and learn to be more disciplined. So since March 2025 I wrote daily: journaling, poetry, brain-dumps etc. The result is this book: *Silence Between the Sirens*.

I didn't plan to publish this book. I kept it hidden in a folder on my computer for months. I kept going back and forth on whether I would release it or not. Reason being: It contains very raw, vulnerable and personal stuff, for the poems and journals were written during this period of deep introspection. About my deepest fears and anxieties, about dealing with my demons and embracing my past. It's very introspective and contemplative and maybe nothing in this book will make sense to anyone except me. Yet, I kept coming back to the idea of publishing it, because I consider *Silence Between the Sirens* a pivotal book in my writer's journey. During this personal writing challenge, my style of writing drastically transformed. I witnessed my poems getting deeper and wider. Once I wrote short vague skeleton-like poems, but here you'll find long expanded, almost prose-like poems.

After the decision was made to go on with this book. I started polishing and editing the poems, rewriting some of them, without censuring myself of course. I always wrote from this open vulnerable space, because one of my core values I have in life is: authenticity. Perhaps this book is the most vulnerable and authentic thing I ever managed to write so far. In this book I was able to tear off some of the masks I once wore and burnt them. There is nothing wrong with being vulnerable and real and expressing your own truths, even when they are still under construction, even when they contradict each other. The writers I love the most and taught me how to write, never held back their visions and personal truths and maybe that's the main reason why I started to write back in 2010.

So here it is: Silence Between The Sirens.

A book about letting go, understanding the depths of love, about being a sensitive dreamer, about healing and validating the parts of the self that never were accepted.

A book that doesn't pretend to be more than what it is.

A book that holds parts of myself that finally found peace.

A book written from the heart.

May this book find the people who find value in it.

May it be a consoling hug, a cup of warm love, a beacon of light for the ones who, like me, are walking through the rough pathways of life to find the light within.

with love,

Tristan De Pauw



Evi Steyaert, pencil on paper, 2025

INNER MONOLOGUE

what begins
is never the beginning
and what ends
still lingers and hums

i return
i keep returning
to the blank field
the not-yet
the almost-thought

i return with empty hands
with the hunger
with the ache
that asks for no answer
only the naming of the ache

i write
to listen
to the sound beneath sound
i write
to speak the thing
without ever saying it

to say the not-saying
to hold it
and hold it
and hold it again

this is the poem
this holding

this is the poem
this breaking of the same sentence
over and over
until it gives me something
that is not mine

i say
and unsay
i say
and i listen to the unsaying

the words repeat
but are never the same
not quite the same
never exactly the same

like breath
like grief
like the light moving across a room
that has no windows

i name the silence
i name the silence: silence
and it becomes something else
it becomes
a sound i do not own

i write
as if writing were a way to disappear
more truthfully
i write
as if writing were a way to remain

the line becomes the breath
the breath becomes the body
the body becomes the listener
the listener becomes the silence
and again i begin
again i begin

the poem is beginning
even when it ends
especially when it ends

i return
to the line
the line that returns me

i say
again and again
i am here
i am here

until I am not

II

i write because i no longer trust the silence
and i no longer trust the voice
so i live in the space between
writing and being written

each line
another disguise
another door
another self
speaking softly
so as not to wake the real one

the real one
who watches
but never speaks
who waits in the corner
holding something too fragile to name

i write not to reveal
but to conceal with elegance
to tell the truth through distance
through rhythm
through the grace of suggestion

i have said I
but the I is never the same
the I is a room I pass through
the I is the window
not the figure behind it

sometimes i write to remember
sometimes to forget
sometimes because the act itself
feels like prayer
or punishment
or both

i write to kneel
without knees
to confess
without faith

i write because
the quiet grows teeth
and because the page
is softer than the wound

the page does not ask for joy
or certainty
only presence
and a little patience

i write as if someone were listening
someone i have never met
someone who already knows
and still wants to hear it again
the way someone listens
to rain on a roof
not for meaning
but for the memory
of not being alone

the line repeats
and i repeat it
until it becomes breath
until breath becomes body
until body becomes listening
and again
again i begin
i write

because not writing
is the final answer
and i am still full of questions
and when the sentence
lands just right
when it opens without force
when it holds
what i could never hold

in that moment
i believe it
i believe myself

and that
is enough

III

i wake up and the poem is already gone
left the bed still warm
left the door open
left its name in the fog on the mirror

i chase it
not with speed
but with devotion
with the slow turning of the same word
in the same mouth
hoping it tastes different today

the truth
has no face
only shadows
that want to be touched
only voices
that sound like mine
after too much time alone

i write
to walk beside the ghost
to say:
you may go
but not without me

every morning i begin again
not because i believe in it
but because i must
because the silence threatens
to speak without me

i say the line
and say it again
i say the line
and say it again
i say the line
until it becomes a wound that sings

not for meaning
but for presence

a soft repetition
a slow circling
like hands learning how to pray
without belief
only hunger

once
i wrote something true
and it ruined me for everything else
so now i write
not for truth
but for that moment before truth
the trembling
the almost
the light before it names the object

i have written
as a man
and as a man pretending not to be one
i have written
from the body
from the soul
from the edge of both
when they no longer answer each other

i do not want to be understood
i want to be heard
like rain
like a closing door
like the last line of a song
you don't quite remember
but hum anyway

this is what i ask for:
a single line
with no purpose
except to exist
long enough
to carry me out of myself
and back in again

i write
because i have forgotten how to end

and the page
still waits.

A BEGINNING

today i let the morning be just that:
 a beginning,
 not a performance

i don't want to rush to be wise
i don't want to dress my thoughts
in cleverness or gold.
i just want to sit by the window,
with a cup of coffee steaming in my hands,
watching birds forget
about the laws of gravity

how easily the world moves
without need to explain itself
the river doesn't rehearse its shimmer
and the clouds don't question
how they've earned their softness.

what if i could be just like that?
 more wind than wall,
 more meadow than map?
what if i stopped
measuring my worth
by things crossed off of a check-list?
what if i let love find me
while i am simply
breathing?

some days,
i just want to be extraordinary
and prove my worth,

but today,
i just want to be kind to myself,
 to the ache in my chest
 that only asks:
 please don't make me
 climb another mountain right now.

so i don't.
i sit and write a poem instead.
and in that,
i am enough.

EVERY MORNING A NEW INVITATION

The first sip of morning tasted bitter.
So I opened up the window
to let November in,
to let my thoughts wander and breathe,
give them air.

Outside, a man is dancing through the streets
to the morning chants of a hummingbird,
and something in his ease
unsettled the dust inside me.

Then I realized:
a choice can be made
to dance with the waves
or to sink into them.

And I understood
that the morning is never just a morning,
but an invitation,
a threshold.

Because outside my window
lives the ever-moment of now
unfolding, unashamed,
asking nothing but presence.

And inside, within these walls,
the tales of the past still linger
patient and heavy,
a closed mind repeating itself
in the stale air of yesterday.

But I have lived there long enough.
So today I leaned into the open window,
into the draft of possibility,
and stepped toward the present
toward its fragile, honest brightness.

And I remembered that abundance
is not a miracle but a decision,
that harmony begins
as a daily, deliberate turning
toward what is alive.

That if we choose it often enough,
it becomes natural
as natural as breath,
as natural as opening a window
to let the world in.

And for a moment
brief as a bird resting on a branch
joy called me by my name.

THROUGH THE NOISE, I WRITE

the world shouts
it blares in sirens and neon lights
in crowds that push and pull and never pause,
in voices that drown every quiet place.

i'm not made for this
my skin is too thin,
my heart too soft, yet too loud inside my chest,
every feeling is a raw wound
exposed to that thunder.

so i write
not to fix anything,
not to prove or fight or win,
but to find a shelter
a small stillness
where my voice can live,
even if it's just a whisper.

the words come soft,
like footsteps on wet grass,
like breath held beneath the surface of the water,
like the fragile wings
of a night fly lost in the light of day.

i write to catch the quiet
to hold it
before the noise swallows it whole.

sometimes the page is a refuge,
sometimes a confession,
sometimes the only place
where the world's roar
turns into something
almost tender.

i write because i need to feel
that being sensitive is not a curse,
but a kind of bravery
to stand naked
in a hurricane
and still listen to the song
inside the silence.

BACKGROUND NOISE IN A BURNING HOUSE

The system doesn't need chains.
It offers screens.
A thousand blinking lights
to keep us from noticing
the fire in our chests.

We work too fast
to ask the right questions.
We move so quickly
that stillness feels illegal.
Everyone is busy,
which is another way of saying
everyone is afraid.

At night,
we pour alcohol into the cracks
of the day,
hoping it will seal them.
Some take pills,
some take powders,
some take whatever
turns the volume down.
Call it medicine.
Call it fun.
Call it temporary.

Television hums like a babysitter
for grown adults.
Stories that end neatly
so ours don't have to.
Laugh tracks to remind us
when joy is supposed to happen.
News that keeps us anxious enough
to keep consuming.

Burnout arrives quietly.
No sirens.
Just a body that refuses
to keep lying.
Depression moves in
like a long winter
no one budgets for.

Anxiety becomes the weather,
always there,
always changing,
always blamed on something else.

We walk on the tips of our toes
through our own lives,
careful not to wake the truth.

By Friday,
we are hollowed out,
needing the weekend
to stitch ourselves back together
with sleep and denial.

But distraction is never rest.
Sedation is not peace.
And the system knows this.
That's why it keeps the lights on,
the bottles full,
the shows endless,
the noise constant.

Because a quiet room
might make us hear it,
that small, dangerous thought:

This pace is killing us.
And we are paying for the privilege.

HEALER MOON

I say, *I am falling apart again,*
I do not trust my own feet.
and she says nothing,
providing me with a silence
that fills the sky
like a slow amen.

I press my hands into the earth,
to feel the cold pull of gravity,
and the steady resonance of being held.

Ay, how it hurts to be alive sometimes.
How it hurts to feel that much and mean so little,
to stand under this vast indifferent beauty
not knowing what to do with my own sorrow.

But the moon, oh the moon,
how she teaches without speaking:
that to suffer is to listen,
that to fall and break is to be shown the ground again,
that to lose is to be returned
to that what cannot be lost.

I look up.
Her silver beams touch my face,
and for a moment I stop searching for answers.
I stop trying to name the meaning of the pain.
I breathe
 slow, heavy and human
until the earth beneath me answers:

A tree that sways in the wind.
The canal rippling through the night.
And a black stray cat, approaching,
as though he was sent by the angels.

And slowly it sinks in again,
that I am enough.
That I hold a quiet rhythm of survival,
and a body that's willing and able
to begin again,
over and over
in the dark.

COFFEE, CIGARETTES AND CROSS-BEAMS

Lately my days are filled
with coffee cups, cigarettes,
and necessary naps in the afternoon;
the kind you take
to survive yourself.

I stare at the ceiling.
17 cross-beams.
I've counted.
They keep the roof from crashing down.
I suppose that's something.

I daydream
not of better days
just ones that don't require
this much maintenance.

I wander and
rehearse conversations
I'll never have.

The coffee gets cold.
The cigarettes burn down slowly,
even when I don't suck at them.

Outside, the world
wears proper shoes
and has always somewhere to be.

But inside this old apartment,
while seated on my window sill,
I exist
between one breath
and the next,

waiting
for something quieter than silence
giving space to my mind to find some peace
while cracking open.

FAITH

i used to think faith
was climbing toward something
a summit, a prize,
a place where life would finally settle.

but now i see it is simpler:
it's the way a cup of water
touches your lips,
the way dusk folds its gentle golden arms
around the surrounding houses,
the way a friend says nothing in particular
and still makes you feel heard,
seen and held.

life is not waiting for us
it is already here,
quiet as breath,
loud as heartbeats.

to have faith
is to stop running
and quit the hustling

and pause

long enough
to notice
where you are
and realize
that you have
already arrived.

WHEN THE SONG IS FINISHED

there is a subtle joy that comes
when you finished writing a song
and it keeps spinning inside your head
pulsing inside your heart
throughout the day

another one arrives
when the song
the child of mind is and heart
starts dancing
trying out its cute little dancing shoes
swaying its arms like branches in the air
to take up space

it's contagious
and after a while
you start to shake and dance
with the child
in your own little universe

when this happens
then you have already succeeded
when this happens
the child, the song
is ready to travel and roam
on its own

PUENTE DE TRIANA (RECUERDOS DE SEVILLA)

I walk
where the Guadalquivir leans into Sevilla
where the bridge arches like a slow sigh.
The night smells of orange blossoms,
smoke, and voices half-remembered.
My feet scrape the cobblestones
and a nylon string guitar threads silver
through each shadowed alley.
Laundry flutters like wings from balconies
and the moon watches,
patiently, like always.

I walk alone,
left her laughter behind
a while ago
by the ruins of Tabarca.
Threw the remaining petals in the gutter
and followed the sacred music
like a wandering mariposa
to something I cannot name.

Here, Barrio Triana sleeps
in waves of perfume, dust and smoke.
I trace it with my fingers,
feeling the buzz of footsteps
that are mine and not mine either.

Feel the *duende* arise here:
a whisper,
a shiver along my spine,
and for a moment
I am no longer alone.

I cross the bridge again,
my shadow stretching across the water,
following the call of something holy.
Summer drips from tiles,
the night tastes of longing.

Longing for her her her.

I let the music take me in
let it dissolve me,
let my sorrow blend with the gypsy's mourning lament

and in the quiet between the strums
and the depth of the deepest songs
I hear myself,
finally,
whole,

a poet
walking
toward the roots
of a city
that remembers every heartbreak,
every fleeting thing called love,
every sigh of the moon
while leaning over
La Puente de Triana.

(Sevilla - July 2021 / reworked from a poem originally in Dutch - 2025)

LONELY SUNRISE OVER BARCELONA

the sea opens it's mouth beneath my feet,
its salty tongue lapping at my ankles,
its voice a thousand sighs and unfinished songs.

the moon of May hangs low,
heavy with secrets,
I reach for her, but she drifts like smoke
across the harbor.

fire trembles in the faraway horizon,
a slow heartbeat beneath clouds that have forgotten the day.
the earth hums below the stones of Barcelona,
pulling me down and lifting me up
all at once,

and I stumble,
and I rise,
and I am neither lost nor found.

the evening air coils around my shoulders,
whispering in a language of pine and salt and wings I cannot see,
but understand.
I let it carry me,
over rooftops, through darkened alleys,
until the sun spills its gold,
and even then, I walk,
drifting between what is and what might be,

a poet open to everything,
to the mercy of night,
and it's stubborn but radiating light.

(Barcelona - 2023-2025 / reworked from a sketch found in a lost notebook)

THE SELFLESS ARTIST

What if the work shapes the maker
and not the other way around?
What if every brushstroke, every word
carves away the lie of identity
until only essence remains?

We say *I create*,
yet who is this “I”
that trembles before the blank page?
a page that knows more
than the hand that touches it?

Perhaps the artist is just the consequence
of art needing a portal.
Perhaps the ego is a temporary mask
the soul wears
to learn humility.

We want to own the miracle.
We want applause to give us weight.
But truth doesn’t beg for audience,
only witnesses
willing to vanish in its light.

And maybe the greatest masterpiece
isn’t the poem or the painting, or the song,
but the slow, unsteady transformation
of the one who dared
to listen.