

DRAW YOUR
SOUL
Free

A MEMOIR
&
MANIFESTO

ANYAKARA

Dedicated to the women at ICT

I wish I could show you
when you are lonely
or

LOST IN DARKNESS
the

astorishing

LIGHT

of your own being.

Hafiz



Handcuffed.

STRIP SEARCHED.

made to squat and cough naked.

Locked in a cell alone.

24 hour observation.

NOTHING BUT ME,

MY MIND &

harsh fluorescent lighting.

Therapist asks

if I need anything.

"PEN & PAPER."

let my mind be free.

The journey begins
with nothing but

BLANK PAPER,

a pint-sized
bendy blue pen,
and a

Soul

that

YEARNS

to go

HOME.



I was told there are only 2 truths
in jail:

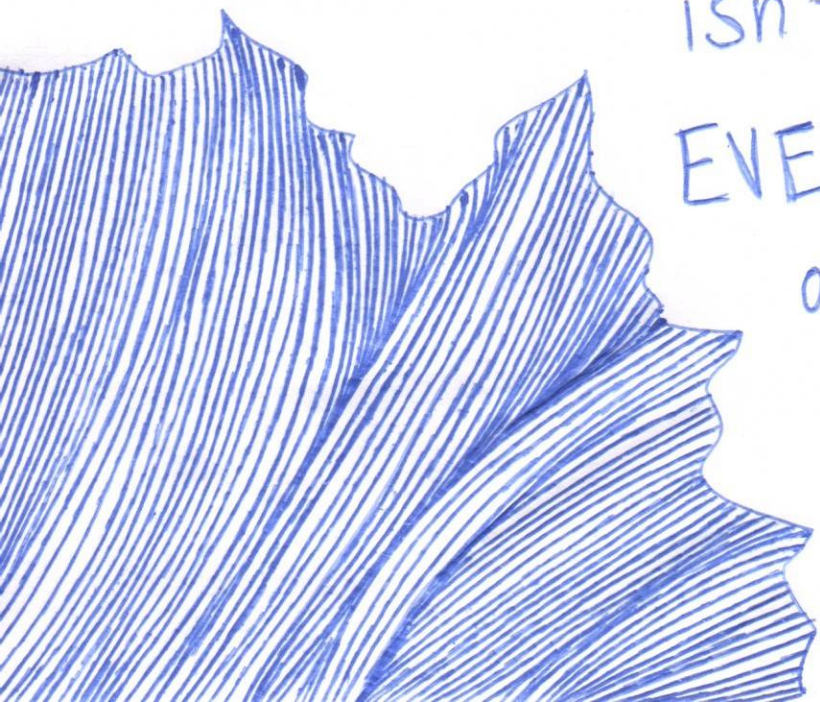
#1 There is NOTHING to do
but eat and sleep

#2 The only thing you learn in
jail is how to be a better
CRIMINAL.

BUT... what if that
isn't

EVERYTHING

after
all?



IN TRUTH THERE IS
always a CHOICE:
WILL I BE...

the victim of my circumstances
~or~

the WARRIOR of my
making?



THE DECISION
IS WAITING
& IT IS MINE ALONE.

... EVERYTHING

CAN BE TAKEN FROM A MAN
BUT ONE THING:

THE LAST OF THE HUMAN FREEDOMS

to choose

ONE'S

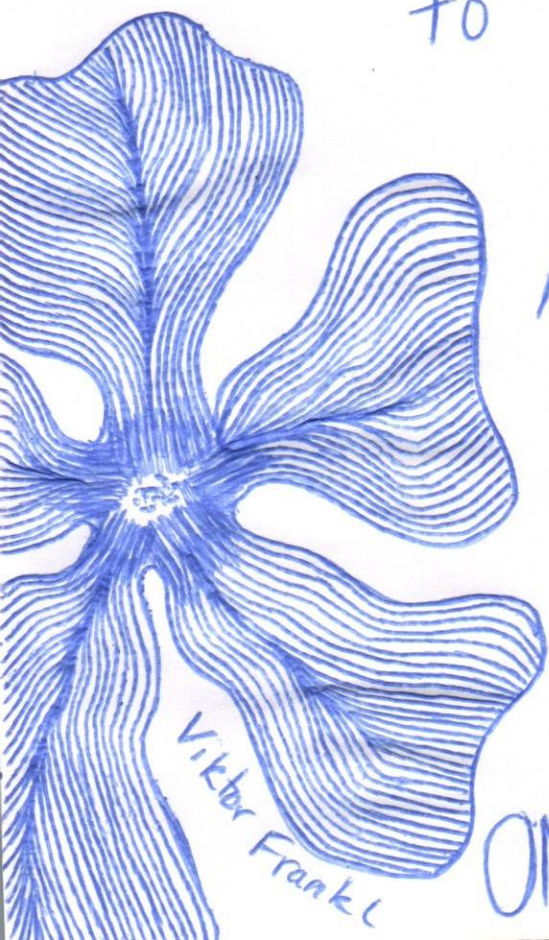
ATTITUDE

IN ANY GIVEN

SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES

to choose

ONE'S OWN WAY.



Viktor Frankl

I CHOOSE TO BE A

WARRIOR FOR PEACE

& Live by the truths of

RADICAL *tenderness,*

unconditional

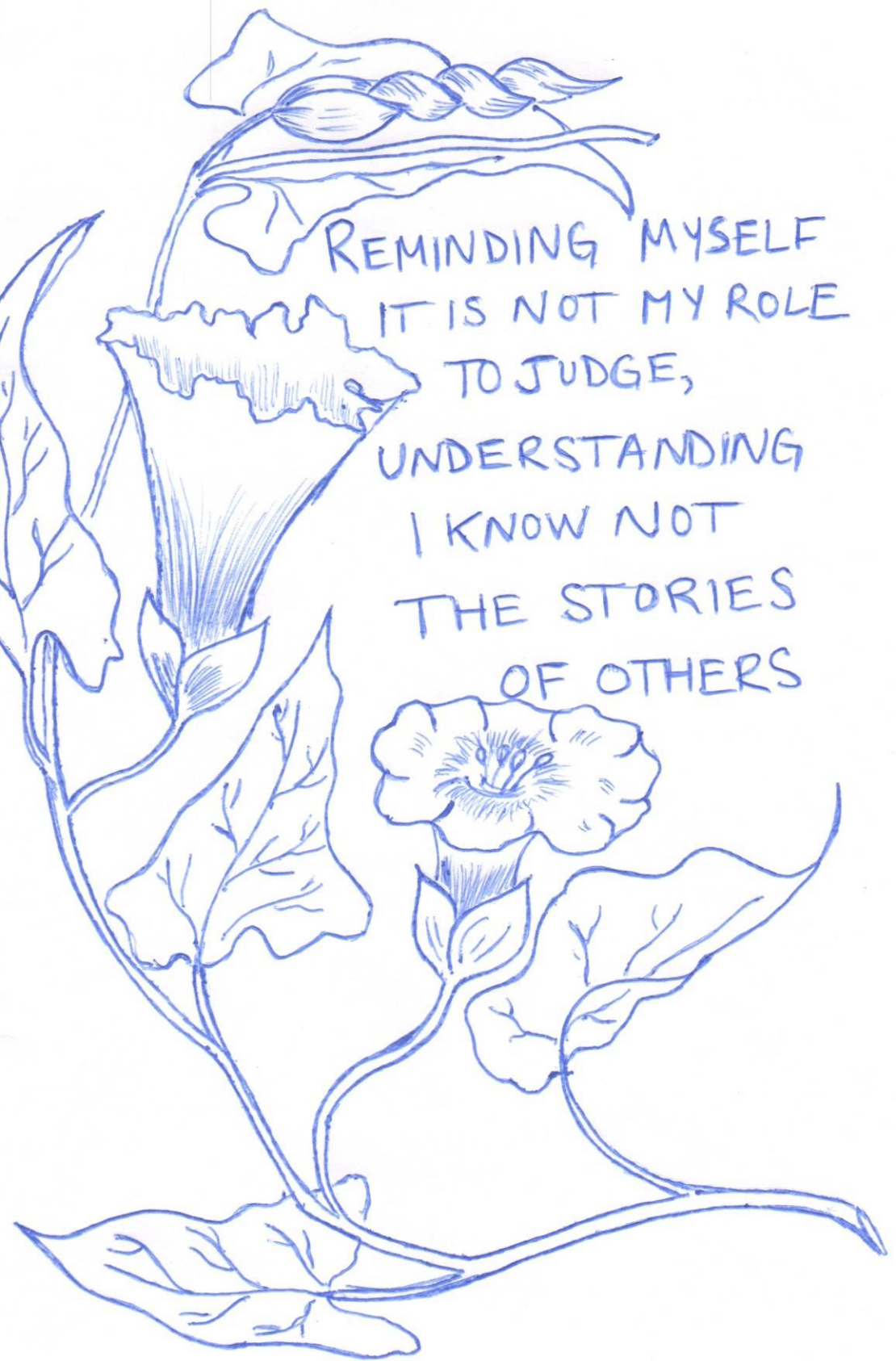
friendliness,

and

FIERCE

compassion.

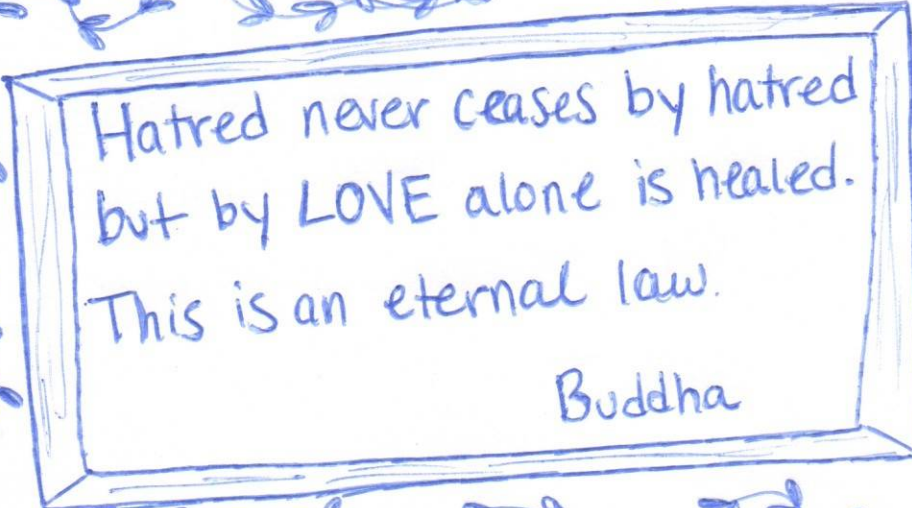




REMINDING MYSELF
IT IS NOT MY ROLE
TO JUDGE,
UNDERSTANDING
I KNOW NOT
THE STORIES
OF OTHERS

MY CHOSEN ROLE
IS TO BE A
PRESENCE of love

BELIEVING
THAT



Hatred never ceases by hatred
but by LOVE alone is healed.
This is an eternal law.

Buddha



YOU MAY DO
WITH MY
BODY
AS YOU WISH,
but
MY
MIND
&
Soul
REMAIN MY OWN.

I have learned that is one thing
to say this

and something completely

DIFFERENT

TO live IT.

So when faced with the reality
of life behind bars,

the question became

How?

Each day I pick up my pen
and put it to PAPER.

I WRITE. I DRAW. I SCRIBBLE...

Many days I'm not even sure

why -

I FEEL HEAVY

& just want to sleep,

BUT I DO IT BECAUSE I KNOW IT

IS GOOD FOR ME,

Like
brushing my
teeth and

moving
MY BODY ARE.



"I'm NOT an artist."

"I can't!"

"I don't know what to do..."

held captive
by the critic who lives in my mind.

PANIC

thrums through my body

and the page

REMAINS BLANK

until...



The world is full of
beauty, if only I can
be brave enough to
see it —

and if I cannot see
it, then be
courageous enough
to make it
myself.

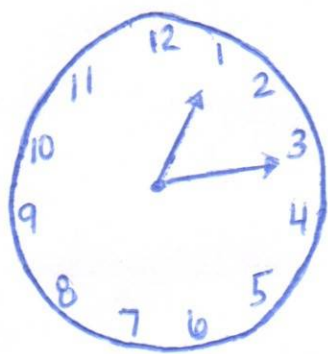
.....
MY DESIRE FOR
FREEDOM

BECOMES GREATER THAN MY
FEAR OF FAILURE & I BEG AN



WHEN I LOOK UP FROM
THE PAGE

HOURS



HAVE PAST
& THINGS HAVE

shifted

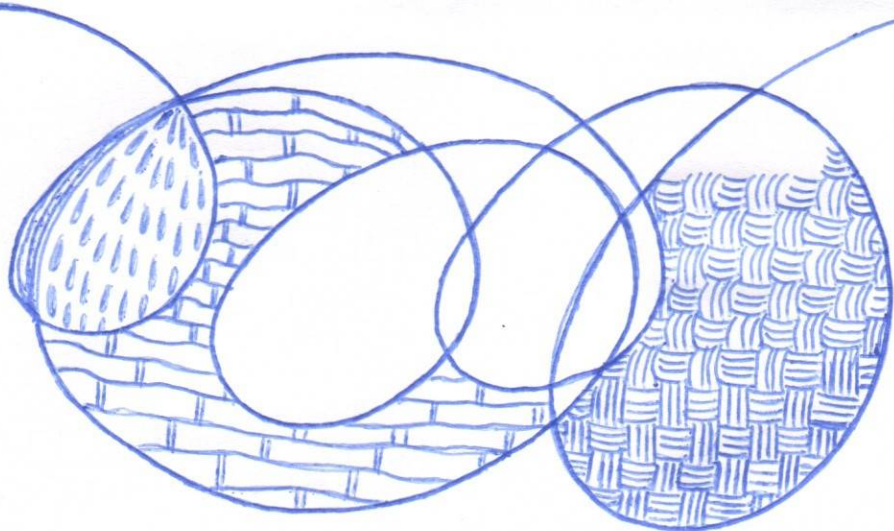
NOTHING HAS BEEN "FIXED",

no answers have been given, and yet —

THINGS FEEL LIGHTER

I FEEL *calmer*, &

I'M NOT ON THE EDGE
ANYMORE.



and I'm reminded that it's not really

WHAT

gets made that is important
but what happens

inside of me

while I am in the

PROCESS OF making

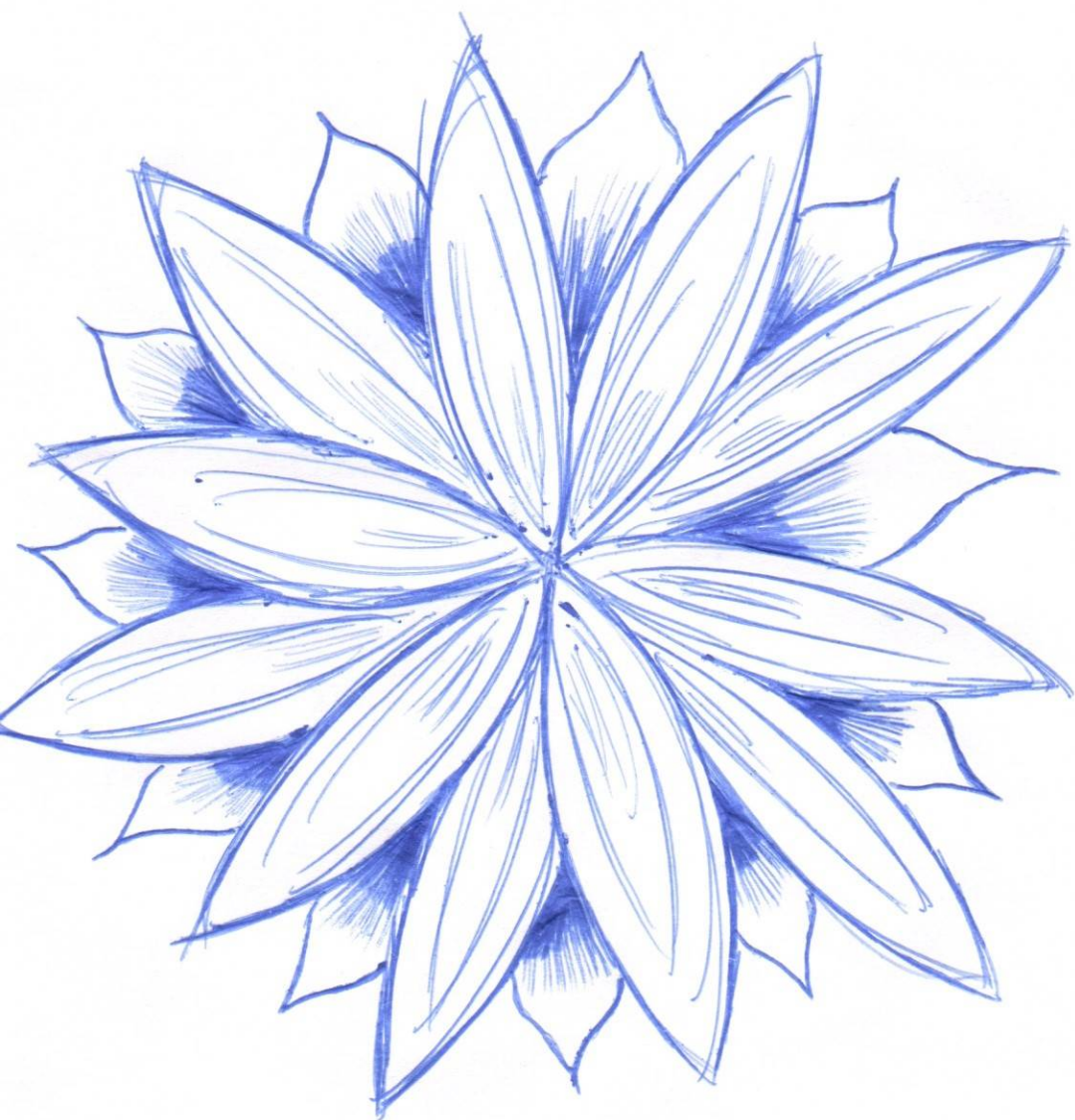
LANGUAGE OF THE Soul

Art provides us a

medium to communicate what lies beyond words. It is not meant to be perfect, or even beautiful, really.

But the strangest thing happens when we get rid of the stranglehold of perfection holding you back from even beginning and simply allow what lives in you to flow out onto the paper; what remains at the end is, paradoxically, beautiful and perfect. because in its existence you see the presence of your soul and there can be no more beautiful sight in the world than that.





Chaos swirling.
tension rising.
conflict brewing.

letting it swirl around me.
tossing and turning about
but not letting it pull me in.

Keeping my attention on my
pen as it flows across
the page.

my breath following the
movement in and out

The stillness of my soul finding peace.

I AM JUST
EXHAUSTED
OF THIS WORLD.

TIRED OF FIGURING OUT
how to face each new day.
I just want to lay down and

cry

UNTIL THE TEARS CARRY ME
OFF TO

DEATH.

I am tired.
so very, very tired.

YOU GOTTA RESURRECT THE
DEEP PAIN WITHIN YOU &
give it a place to live that's not within your body.

LET IT LIVE IN ART.

LET IT LIVE IN *writing*.

LET IT LIVE IN MUSIC.

let it be devoured by building

BRIGHTER CONNECTIONS.

Your *body* is not a
COFFIN

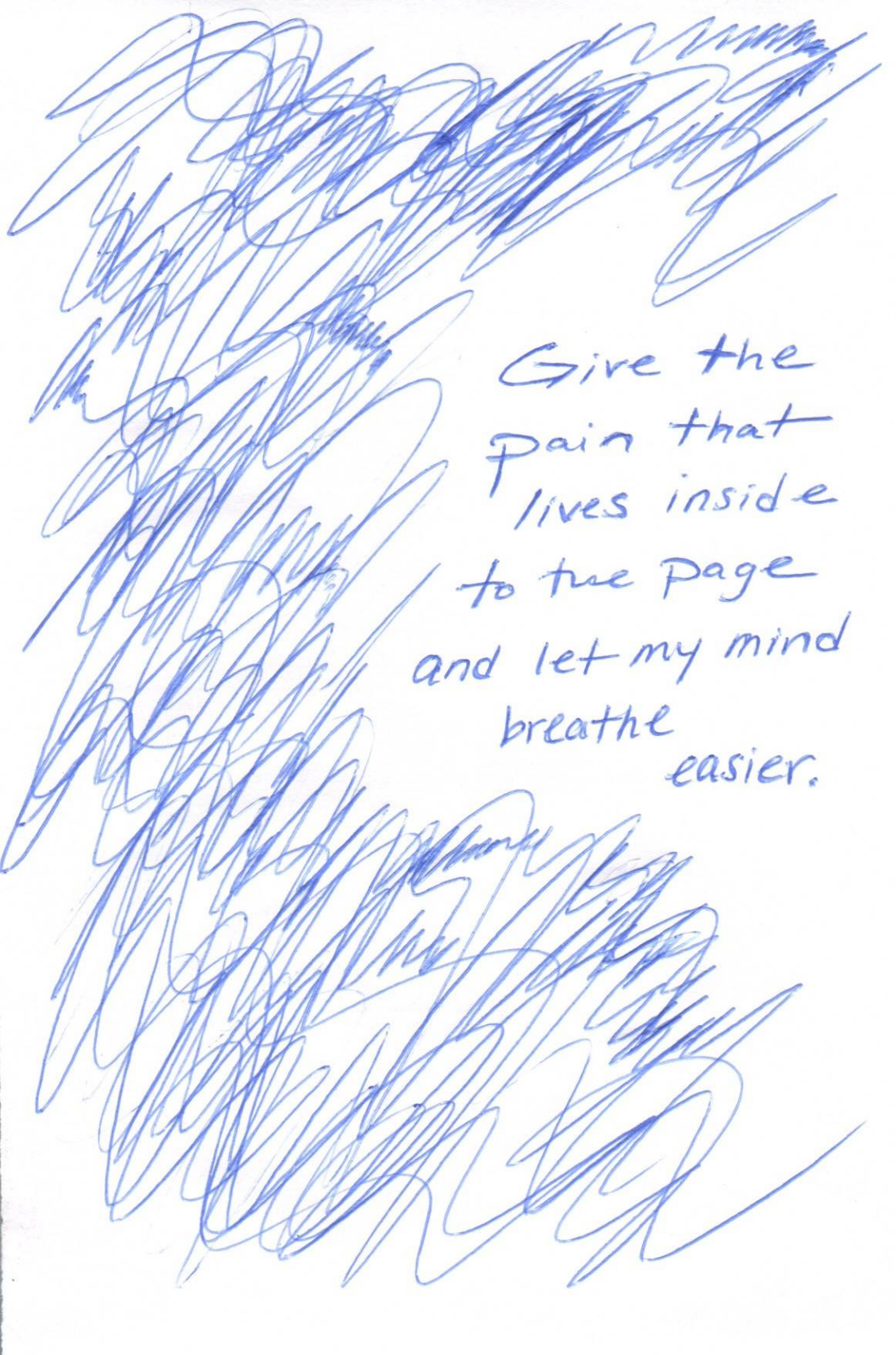
for pain to be
buried in.

Put it

SOMEWHERE ELSE.

~Chime Ora





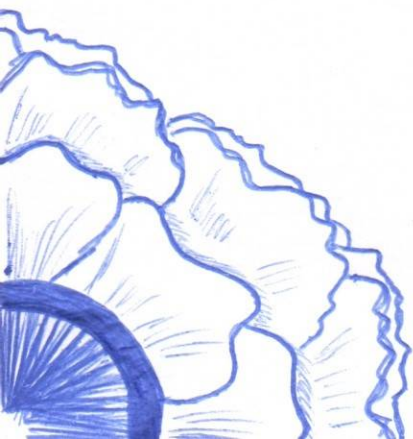
Give the
pain that
lives inside
to the page
and let my mind
breathe
easier.

There is more
to this world than
I can see —

So let me close my eyes
and listen with my
heart

so I may hear the
TRUTH

of my
Soul



EVERY DAY
IN A *thousand* LITTLE WAYS
THE SYSTEM SEEKS TO
STRIP ME OF MY
humanity

BUT I REFUSE
to give in because they
caged not a BEAST
but a *being*

AND I STAND FIRM IN MY TRUTH

I love
MY OWN
CREATIVE LIFE
more than I love

cooperating
WITH MY OWN

OPPRESSION.



-Clarissa
Pinkola
Estés

I CAN
FEEL

therefore

I AM

Feel

AUDRE LORDE

Each morning I sit,
I simply SIT.

Finding my breath, following it
IN and OUT

my mind races off seeking answers,
Craving certainty, bringing up old demons,
escaping into daydreams.

I see these thoughts come & say with compassion

"THINKING"

Letting them go & coming back to my breath.

Beginning again over & over...

with each breath

touching
PEACE,

knowing
PEACE,

Being
PEACE.



Behold my Soul



She is tinged in blood
and ringed in light.

she is a fierce and wild thing.

She sings and she rages,
she births and holds death.

She is MIGHTY and fragile.

Her strength lies in her heart.

A warrior she is for peace & compassion.

Inexhaustible in her truth.

She rises from the ashes of her past.

Magnificent in her glory

she always ^{was} but could never be seen.

Behold her radiance & bask in her love.

She is me —

Let me never forget again...



I am simply human
fallible,
flawed,
and sacred.

WHAT I'VE LEARNED
IS THAT IT IS

POSSIBLE

TO HEAR

THE VOICE OF MY
soul,



FEEL THE PRESENCE OF

p·e·a·c·e,

AND KNOW

FREEDOM

EVEN WHEN LOCKED AWAY
FROM THE WORLD.

When I sit with you...

as your pen moves steadily across the page
creating magic from nothing
you listen
and I remember a part of myself
I'd forgotten long ago.

When I sit with you...

it feels like
we leave and go to
another world.

The sounds get softer
around us.

The chaos less tempting
to join in on.

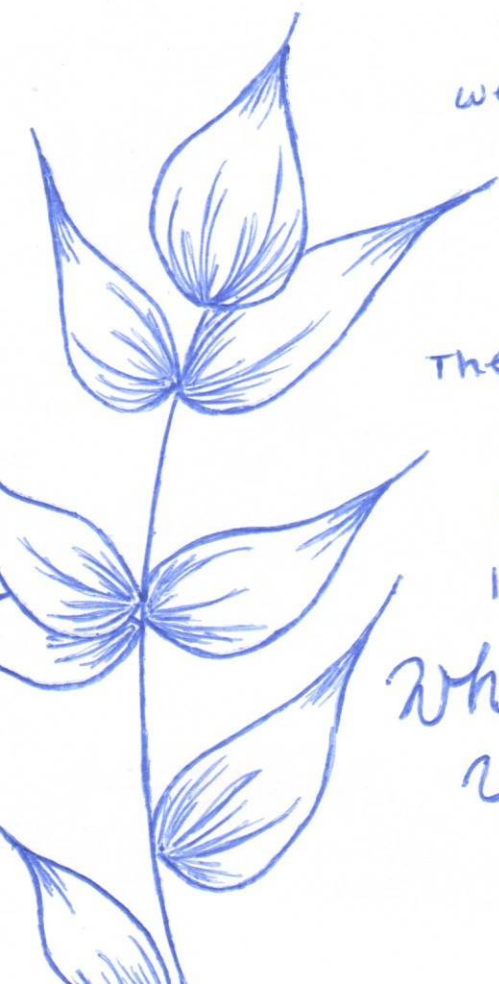
I breathe a little easier.

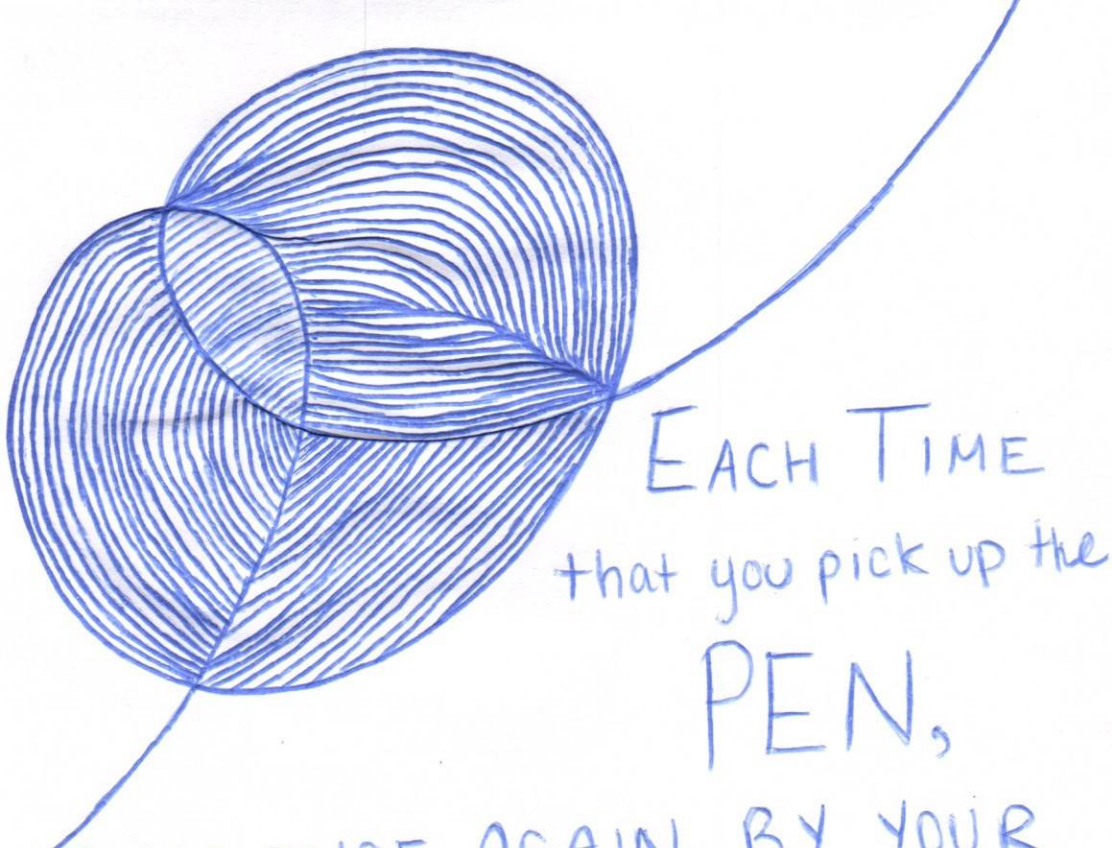
I find a little peace.

When I sit with
you...

I get to simply

BE.





EACH TIME
that you pick up the
PEN,
I AM ONCE AGAIN BY YOUR
side.

The peace you seek is already there
WITHIN YOU,
just waiting to be discovered.

FOLLOW YOUR breath & ALLOW
the page to hold you as you
FIND YOUR WAY.

THIS IS NOT THE END.

The story remains incomplete for
it is not mine alone to tell.

Pages have been left blank

ON PURPOSE.

This is space for
your VOICE

TO BE HEARD,

FOR YOUR SOUL

to come back to

Life





THERE
IS
POWER

to be found in a voice once

silenced...

SO YOU MUST HANG ON.

Now the only question that remains is:

WHAT

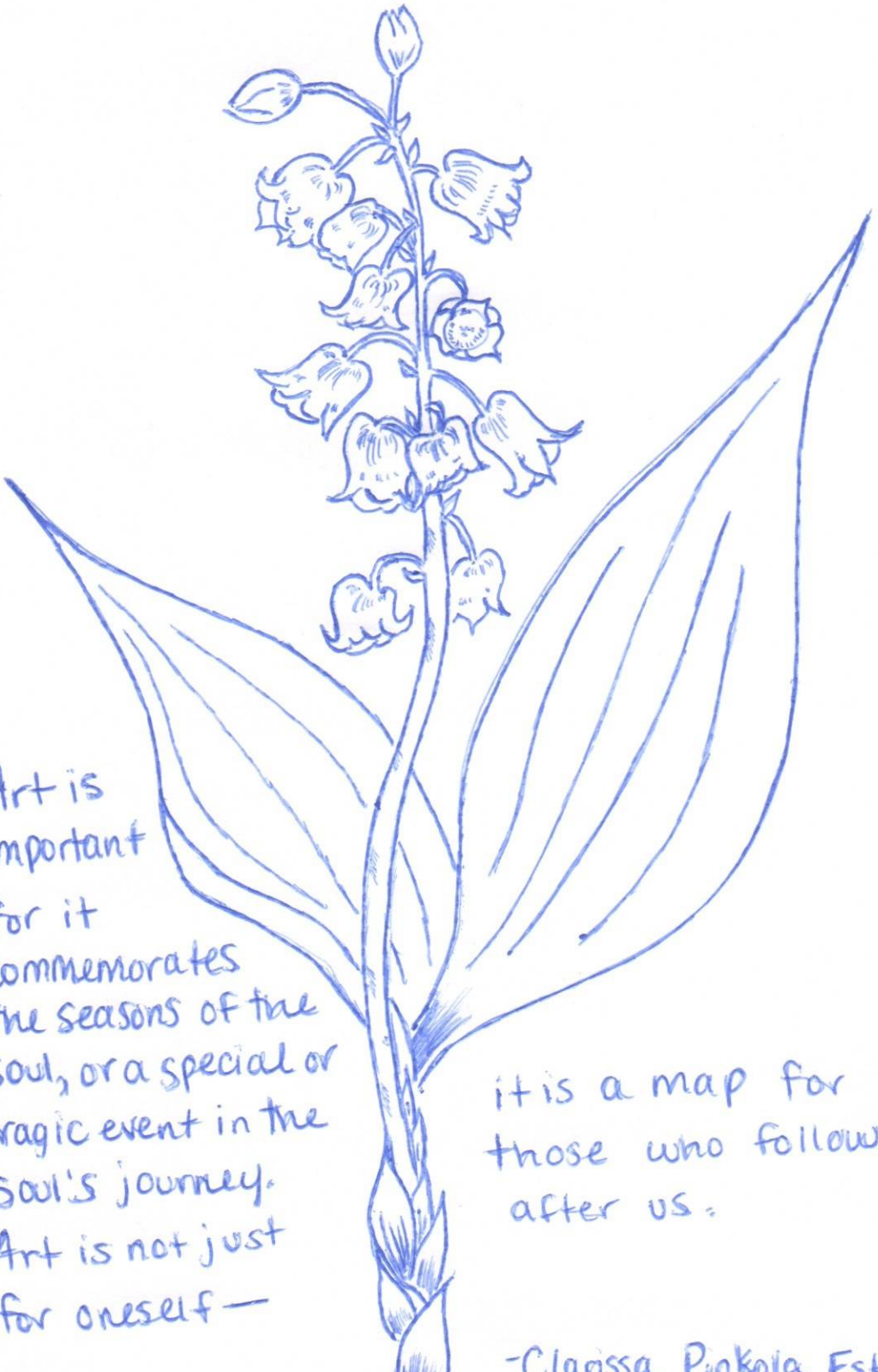
IS THE STORY

your soul

IS CALLING YOU

TO TELL?



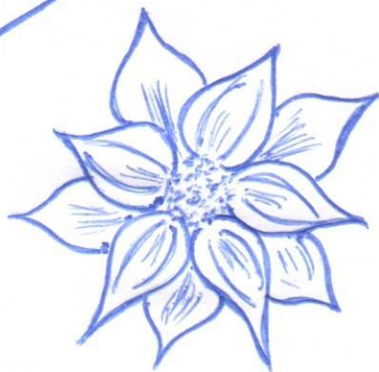


Art is
important
for it
commemorates
the seasons of the
soul, or a special or
tragic event in the
soul's journey.
Art is not just
for oneself —

it is a map for
those who follow
after us.

-Clarissa Pinkola Estés

NEVER
Forgotten




MY BODY WILL WALK FREE
BUT MY SOUL'S FOREVER ENTWINED
WITH THESE WOMEN
FOR

I am *them*

&

they ARE ME.

about author



From writer, artist, & yogi

ANYAKARA

comes a collection of poetry, prose & art
that tells the story of her journey
to personal freedom while serving "A County
Year" at Ingham County Jail in Michigan.

Draw Your Soul Free

is a letter of love to anyone
who feels imprisoned by
a system of oppression.

Freedom. Is. Possible.
&

you are not alone.