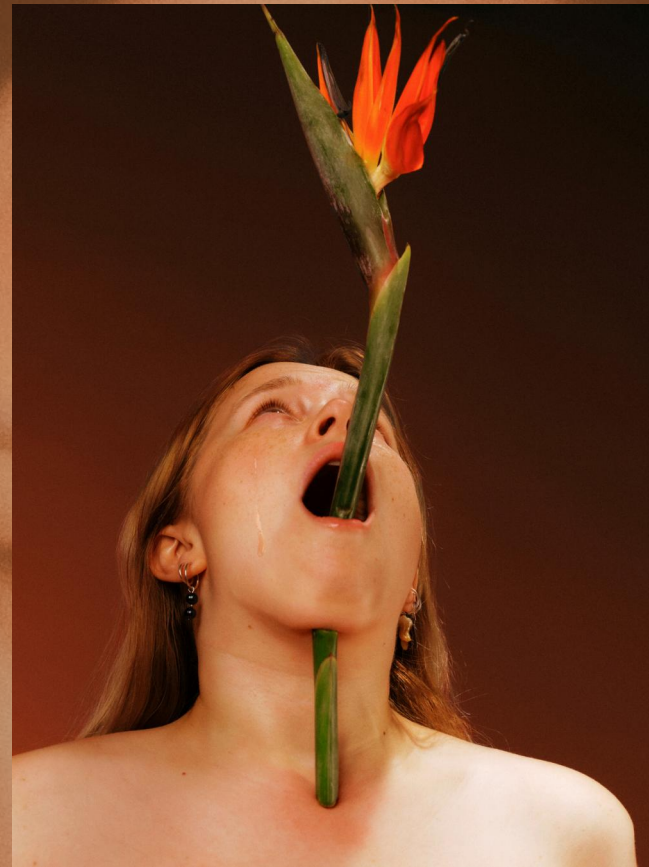


About my Emotional Numbness

BALM

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Balm - Selected Works





# BALM

## About my Emotional Numbness

Let me show you the 18-year story between me  
and emotional numbness

Between me and the world, there seemed to be  
a thin, fragile membrane.

It diluted my joy, and it blocked out the weight  
of sorrow.

When others laughed, I followed with a smile;  
when others grieved, I learned to bow my head  
and fix my gaze upon the floor.

It wasn't until ten years later that I learned from  
a therapist this state had a name—emotional  
numbness.

It was my body's way of protecting me, a defense built to withstand unbearable pain.

It severed my connection to feelings, leaving all my senses suspended in stillness.

Back then, I was like a hollow shell, stripped of judgment, striving only to imitate others in order to “grow into” a so-called normal person.

I became a bystander, standing between the world and “the others”—watching coldly, yet unable to touch.

I could not truly feel grief or joy, but my body—through headaches, nosebleeds—carried every trace of suffering.





A decade later, when I finally grew flesh and blood again, when I began to feel genuine joy and sorrow,

I longed to reach back and gently touch that child I once was—

The one who stumbled through the fog of emotion, searching so hard.  
You have endured so much.

Let me take over now, and tell your story.

# WARNING

**The story you are about to enter touches on emotional numbness, childhood wounds, and the fragility of the body.**

**Some images include nudity, and certain passages may feel unsettling.**

**PLEASE TAKE YOUR TIME-STEP IN ONLY IF YOU FEEL READY.**

## Chapter One

# The Shell

It was my body's way of protecting me... I became a bystander... I could not truly feel grief or joy, but my body—through headaches, nosebleeds—carried every trace of suffering.



# What is emotional numbness?

What is emotional numbness?

It is knowing, when others laugh, that something is **supposed** to be funny. It is knowing, when others cry, that something is **supposed** to be sad. I visited the sick because I was told it was the right thing to do— but did I care? I did not know what true care felt like. **I don't have real happiness. I don't have real sadness. And, I don't have real pain.**

I remember hiding under my blanket in middle school, watching films that everyone called “tearjerkers.” I tried so hard to squeeze out tears, hoping to feel what others felt. But I never cried.

What stayed with me was not the story on screen, but the bitter realization that even my effort to cry left me dry-eyed.

Long-term numbness carried another consequence: avoidant attachment. Even with people who truly cared for me, I remained distant. I could not open my heart—I did not even know how to.

Just like with my childhood caregivers:  
each time I opened myself and began to attach, they left.  
My mind learned a lesson and repeated it endlessly—  
**don't attach, don't attach, don't attach.**

So when someone came too close, when they tried to knock on my shell, my body reacted with warning signals: they will leave. And before they could, I defended myself, sometimes with distance, sometimes with aggression.

In this shell I was protected, yet imprisoned.





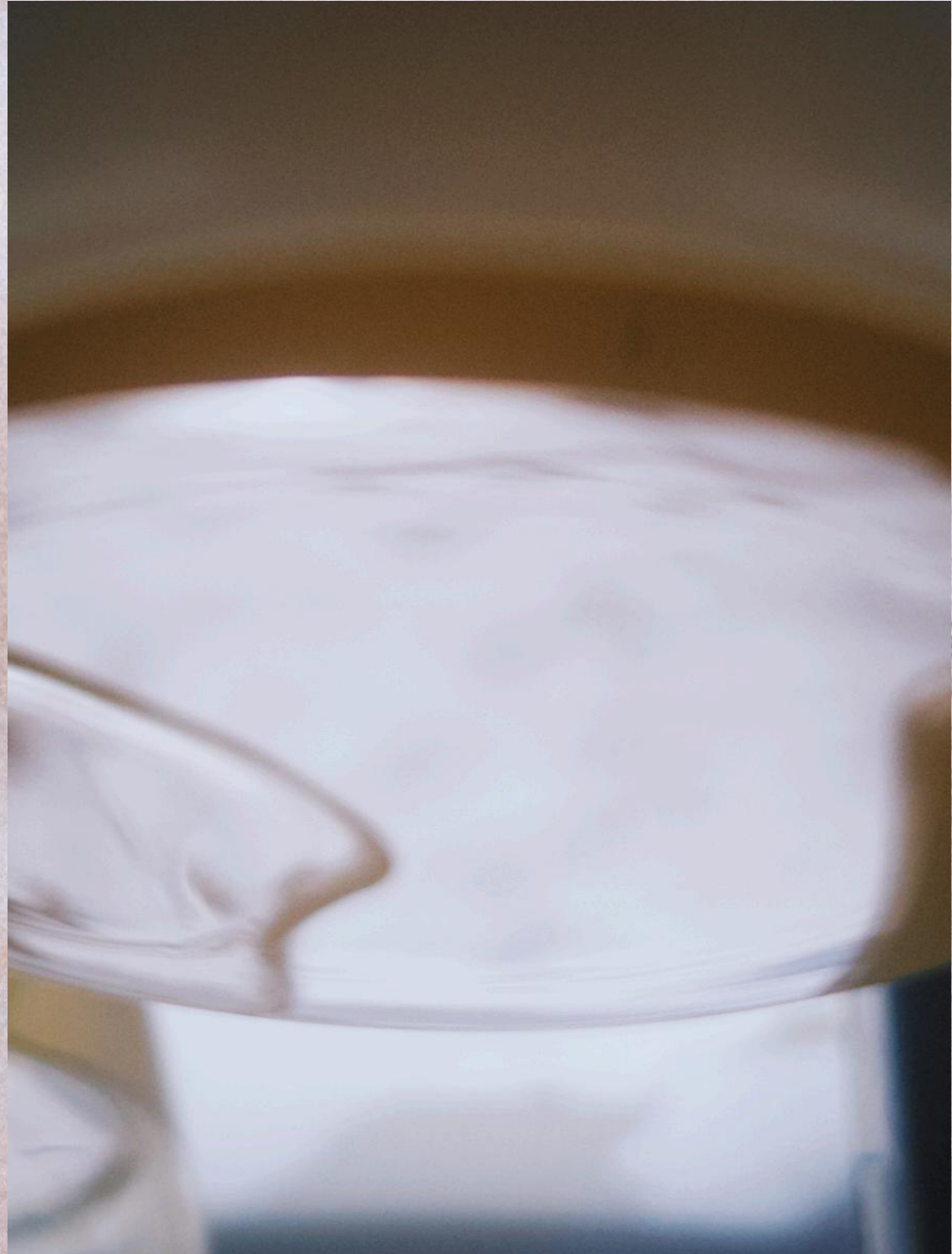






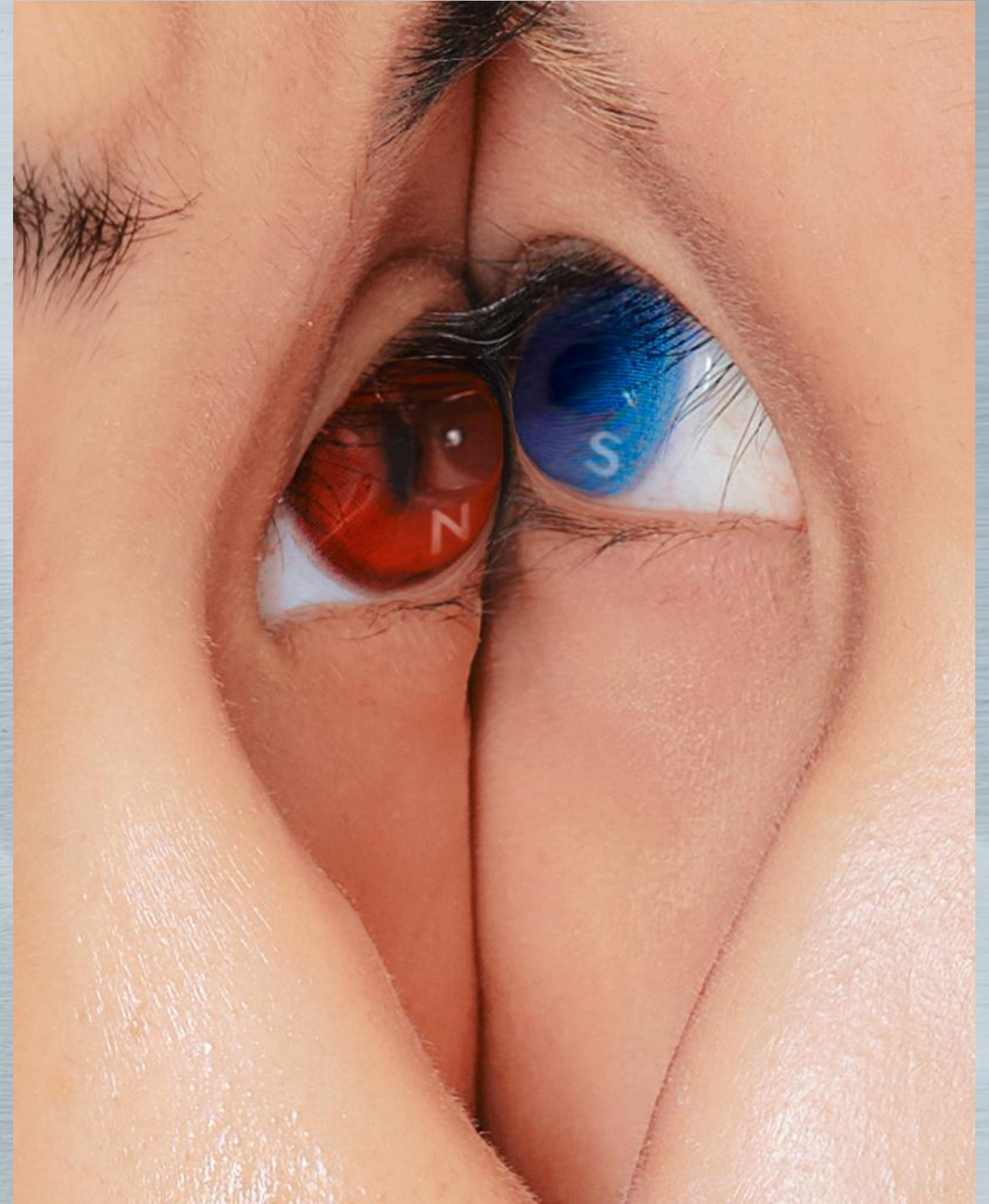






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## Chapter Two



# The Membrane

This was the beginning of numbness:  
not absence,  
but a quiet distance that dulled both joy and grief.



## Why emotional numbness?

Curious about the roots of my emotional numbness, I once turned to a therapist.

In childhood, my caregivers changed again and again. Until six months old, it was my parents. After that, my grandparents. I still remember one winter when my parents visited me—I looked at them and thought: So these are my parents?

Later I returned to my parents, but because of their long working hours, I was placed in a boarding kindergarten. I could only see them on weekends. My attachment was always unstable: just as I began to bond with one caregiver, they would disappear.

My mother recalls that in those early years I was often ill, bedridden with fevers. Yet my memory is blank; I have no recollection of those days but having memory before that. The therapist explained: when the inner pain is unbearable, the body creates physical symptoms, and the spirit briefly escapes the body. Memory, too, vanishes in this **dissociation** (Your soul leaves your body to release the pain).

**A child's mind cannot grasp why loved ones leave; she only knows: I was just beginning to depend on you, and now you are gone.**

The pain of attachment followed by rupture is too sharp. And so, before the age of six, I grew a fragile membrane around myself. If I could not attach too deeply, if I could shut out feelings and senses alike, then I could be safe from harm.



write you...

stay

with me?









Chapter Three

The Touch

I felt, I felt, I felt, I felt.



## *How emotional numbness fades away*

How did numbness finally dissolve?

For me, there were two turning points.

The first came when I entered university.

I had grown up as a “good student,” always chasing the next achievement—a good middle school, a good high school, a good university.

But once I studied design, there was no single standard to follow. And with so much unstructured time, I was forced to reflect on my relationship with the world. I felt countless blades of grass sprouting within me, breaking through the soil.

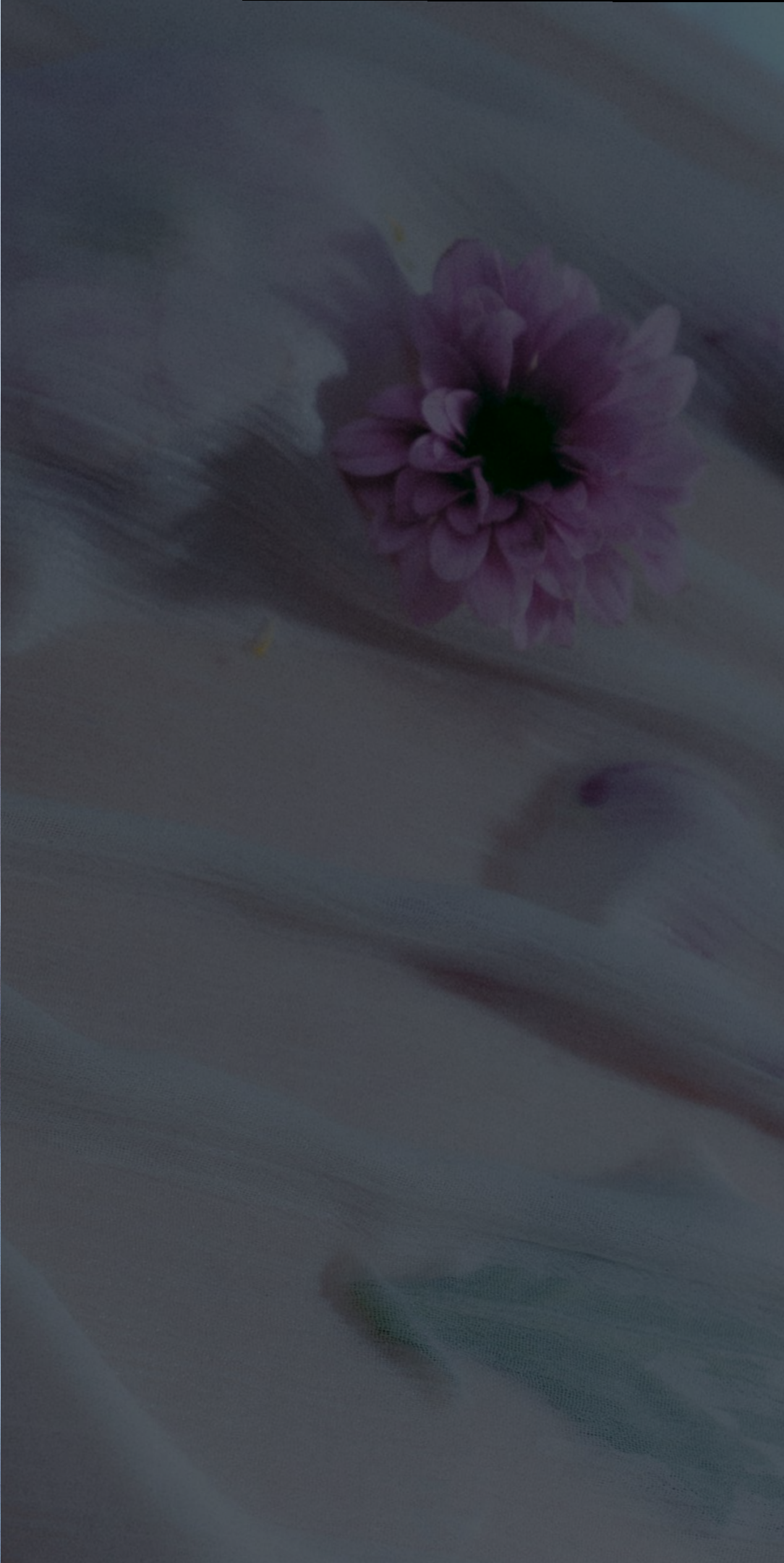
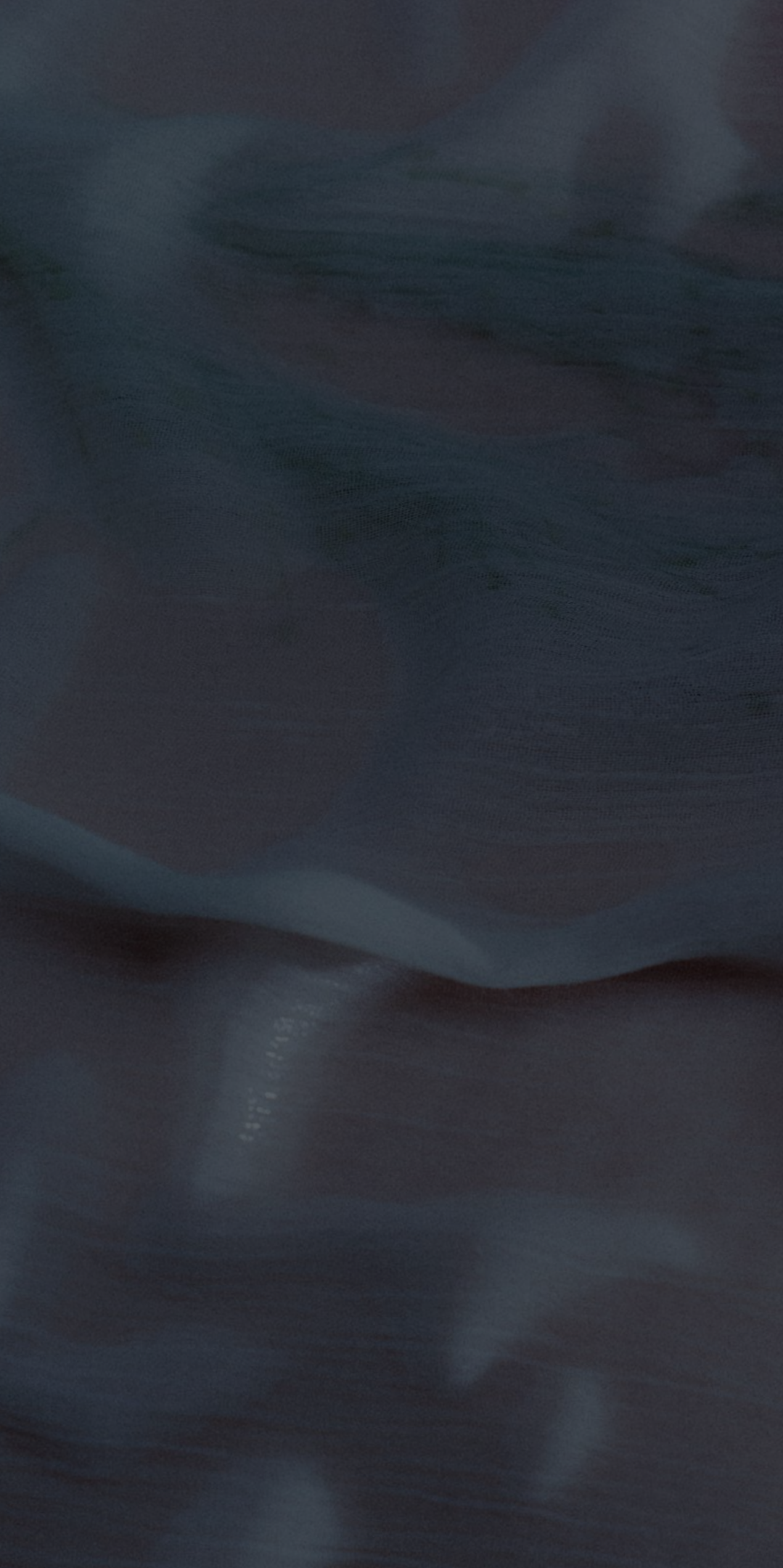
For the first time, my heart welcomed a spring.

The second came later, when someone gently knocked on the shell around my heart. Through quiet gestures, they showed me what love could mean. They stayed, long and steady, by my side. But because of my defenses—my instinctive aggression—they eventually left.

This time, they did not return. They did not want to return. And in that moment, something shattered inside me.

All at once, crimson flowers burst through my shell, their petals soaked in blood, tearing down the barrier between me and the world. My tears washed away the stains, and at last I felt it—I could sense love, and I could love.









# Credits

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All the pictures here are about me.  
It's my balm.