

*'Princess' Is No Insult*

There is a girl who sits in her room,  
her hands in her lap, her eyes on the moon.

Her fingernails dig and tear at her skin,  
trying to let the soft moonlight in.

"I'll be pretty this way," she says, she dreams,  
"Ethereal, gossamer, wrapped in moonbeams."

She wants to be different. She waits for the day  
when people will love her and lovers will stay.

She doesn't believe her mother, her friends;  
she watches herself through a tainted lens.

Her mornings she spends hoping scars will fade,  
but at night she reopens the old lines she made.

And in the moments between waking and sleep,  
she wonders what it would be like to believe.

"I'm beautiful," she says to herself, to the ceiling,  
but her voice is empty. Her words have no feeling.

She lets the night take her in hopes of some peace,  
but even in dreams her demons won't cease.

A dragon haunts her, eyes mirrored and black.

She stares into it and her flaws stare back.

Its tail snakes around and crushes her waist  
'til bile meets her throat so rancid in taste.

Its claws trace along her every defect;  
its hot breath promises she can't be perfect.  
So she waits and hopes and dreams of love,  
of someone to save her, to reach in from above,  
pull her out of the shadows and into a light  
where she may yet survive this tireless fight.  
She imagines some hero, some savior to come,  
To take her someplace unlike where she came from.  
A stranger whose soul she'll have known by heart  
As if all this time he was her missing part.  
She hopes for a person who'll notice her pain,  
who'll follow her scars to learn the terrain.  
He'll love her, she thinks. He'll heal with each touch.  
He'll handle her all even when it's too much—  
his heart full of love, so charming and true  
that she might actually love herself, too.  
But when she awakes with nothing to save her  
she begs her reflection to try and be braver.  
"I can't handle another heartbreak today,"  
she whispers, wishing the pain away.  
She puts on a smile and heads for the door  
but this morning she carries something more:  
A leather-bound notebook, its pages still bare.

She writes on its lines with painstaking care  
Of parts of herself that she doesn't despise,  
of her imperfect body and curious eyes,  
of hands even when they tremble and shake,  
because she knows the things they can make.

Each time she looks at herself today,  
she vows to find something nice to say.

She won't break herself down any longer  
or make the cruel dragon any stronger.

She's waited too long for a prince to swoop in,  
not realizing that true love comes from within.

Now, she'll rewrite the fairytales on her shelf  
so the princess can finally save herself.