

# Three Month Debut

Written by Bethanie Sherwood

*Dedicated to God and my  
mother for fighting to  
keep me alive, even when  
I wasn't sure I wanted to  
be.*

Copyright © 2023 Bethanie Sherwood

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the author. She is available at the site below.

Cover image by Bethanie Sherwood

ISBN: 9798863325446

Second printing edition 2023.

[ko-fi.com/beththefreelancer](https://ko-fi.com/beththefreelancer)

# Table of Contents

## *Part One: Exposition*

- Page 3 | Table of Contents
- Page 5 | Meet The Women
- Page 7 | In Memoriam
- Page 9 | A Letter for God
- Page 11 | Armor
- Page 12 | Salvation
- Page 13 | Seasons
- Page 14 | Apostleship
- Page 15 | Eclosion

## *Part Two: December*

- Page 17 | Wednesday At Two
- Page 18 | I Love You
- Page 19 | Living In A Society
- Page 21 | Cleanse Me With Hyssop
- Page 22 | Recovery
- Page 24 | This Anxiety
- Page 25 | 103 Degrees
- Page 26 | Debrief Me
- Page 28 | Trust and Control
- Page 29 | Servitude

# Table of Contents

## *Part Three: January*

Page 31 | Study The Meek

Page 33 | Obedience

Page 34 | Growing Pains

Page 35 | Idle Hands

Page 36 | Hunger and War

Page 37 | The Evangelists

Page 38 | Fireflies

## *Part Four: February*

Page 40 | On Reflection

Page 41 | I Think I Know

Page 42 | The Path You've Set

Page 43 | Bloom

Page 44 | Into Step

## *Extra's*

Page 45 | Author's Note

Page 46 | A Prayer

Page 47 | About The Author

# Meet the Women

In order to understand  
How I got to where I am  
You'll have to meet the women

The first is a visionary  
Quick to ignite  
Her passion burns like the stars in the sky  
She's a beacon of joy and peace  
When she remembers to heed  
A force of light and love  
Decades before her time

She speaks of a harvest  
Four seasons past  
With experiences too broad  
And a memory too vast  
Her words are bold and constant

The second provides  
Born of love and war  
A daughter of strategic practicality  
She's a magnet for unsolicited company  
She wields discernment like a weapon  
To unmask the soul beneath

At her suggestion  
Cracks fill and perspectives shift  
Her words are soft and resounding  
She chooses each battle cautiously

# Meet the Women

I marvel at their strength  
But take note of their weaknesses  
My heart recedes  
To protect what's left of me

Was all this healing in vain?

Because what they don't do  
Is disrupt the delusion  
They won't discuss the children  
That were led astray

What they don't say  
Is how strong women  
Struggle  
To find men of substance

In Memoriam

My father was toxic  
Before toxicity was mainstream  
The kind that made you question if  
They pumped acid through his teeth  
As he was aging

It's like  
His brain didn't know how to power down  
Like  
He viewed every life force as  
An immediate threat  
To his own

How exhausting that must've been

He fought for control in gardens of peace  
He birthed opponents from perception  
Then buried them alive  
And doused their graves with gasoline

And yet, his actions weren't as daunting  
As the glint of justification  
In ice blue eyes  
I swore they could cut through time

He wanted an apprentice  
I made a decent protégé  
Until my first encounter with cancer  
It took my grandfather  
He was a man of honor

# In Memoriam

What can you do when your world implodes?

In his hospital room  
As he breathed his last breath  
Part of me died too  
And from its ashes  
Emerged the will to protect

Surrounded by grief  
With the knowledge that a predator lay lurking  
I made the decision to defend and uplift

I chose change

I chose this



# A Letter for God

Father,

Thank you  
I don't know where I'd be  
Without you

Except dead  
Literally, spiritually, both

You found me in a time of distress  
Well  
I finally listened then  
But you'd been there  
Present, waiting patiently  
Protecting me

Always

You picked me up  
Dedicated time, resources, strength  
You made me who I am today

You were the first interaction  
I recall with clarity  
The first one to demonstrate  
That love doesn't have to be  
A transaction

# A Letter for God

Help me to be who you view me as  
Show me  
If it is your will  
The way to you

Your vision, your plan, your truth  
Are all I'm interested in

I'm sorry for creating friction and adversity  
I'm sorry for a wavering faith  
One that bends and fades  
With time  
With distractions

I don't want to be distracted

I want to be of service

If everyone in the car  
Has the same destination  
Does it matter who drives?

Amor

I've yet to find someone  
Willing to hand over the keys  
Even rarer is the capacity  
To remember those in the backseat  
Once their position is guaranteed

Then there are drivers  
Who launch from moving cars  
To avoid healthy confrontation  
It creates apprehension  
And I am not immune

# Salvation

My testimony is  
Born from visible bruises  
Invisible binds that twisted the  
Development of my mind and words  
Forged into weapons  
Thrust through my soul

God has set me apart

My life is eternal, everlasting  
Simply because He loves me  
My 'coming of age' is documented  
In the margins of my Bible

When the people of this world failed me  
He was there to pick me up  
He accepted my soul  
He cleansed my sins  
He loved me before I was conscious and  
He's loved me since

I do not belong here  
I am set apart  
Sent on a mission  
Grateful for the opportunity but missing  
My Father - my home - all the while

Label me however you wish  
But let me ask you this:  
Are you home?  
Do you belong?  
Is this all you want?

# Seasons

Change is constant

Caterpillars morph into butterflies

Ocean waves shift and fold

Snakes shed their skin

Spiders molt

Humans experience trials

And hardships

They grow

Passing through different phases of life

Enduring change every step of the way

Things are often not as they seem

Whether or not you're able to understand

They tend to progress into the next version

Of themselves

Regardless

# Apostleship

I like to think of my time with God  
As just that  
*Time*

Should He ask me to go to a new place  
I will go  
Should He ask me to teach  
As He has taught me  
I will introduce new concepts  
With renewed patience

When He asks me to speak directly  
To deliver a message plainly and boldly  
I swallow my tongue

What use are my gifts compared to  
The presence of the Father?

We're all students on a mission  
Fumbling about in blind faith

Who am I to tell them how to age?

Who am I to refuse?

# Exclusion

Fear can provoke the strangest responses  
As a child  
Mine drove me to exclusion  
But I wasn't one for idle hands  
So I used the adrenaline to build defenses  
They tower; I pace

Sometimes, when it's quiet, I envision it  
These walls are carved from stone and  
Encased in brick  
They stretch further than I can comprehend  
Cloak my presence  
Dull my impact

I used to like that about them

Now  
I push myself from the thick of it  
I try to see the chrysalis  
As He does  
I recognize the intimidation of their size  
Admire the impenetrable design

Would it look small next to a legion of angels?  
Assuming they stand shoulder to shoulder  
Sword to sword  
As an army united before the Lord  
What good do my walls actually do?

December



Wednesday At Two

My son is a soft soul—a gentle giant

Trips to school are often met with  
Opposition or defiance  
I don't blame him  
But I'm not conflict-avoidant  
This morning was tough  
I had to bribe him

Sometimes I think he plans it  
Like there's something inside  
Urging him to fight

I hope the world doesn't dull his might  
I hope I don't inadvertently censor him

He has a history of manipulating truth  
And his oddities only grow  
With time  
I love when he speaks his mind  
He tends to look reality in the eye  
And decline

"Did you get in any fights today?"

"Yeah, but now we get to pick who we battle."

*I Love You*

Father,

Help me discern if this message is from You  
Please help me see  
Your vision and truth

I love you  
I love you  
I love you

Thank you

Let your vision be  
Let your will be  
Let your plans and truth be heard

# Living In A Society

I can't count how many times  
I've heard the claim  
A person's decisions aren't their own  
To every action, a consequence

Especially when the one  
Who knocked the first domino into the next  
Sits back - relaxed  
How did we become this dismissive  
Of cause and effect?

Every time I hear the phrase  
"We live in a society"  
There is a fire inside of me  
It roars to life and dances  
Atop willful injustice

What could you possibly mean?  
Where is your accountability?  
Are you a child of the one true King  
Or a pawn in someone else's scheme?  
Do you stand for anything?

In this world there is only one thing  
We can control  
There is one circumstance  
One situation  
In which our presence  
Has a definite impact

# Living In A Society

Why are you willing to throw that away?  
How can you so casually  
Lay waste  
To your own name?

If you do anything, let it be self-transparency  
Build a relationship with a sturdy foundation  
Talk to yourself  
As if you are the person  
You've been looking for

Recognize your stance on heated topics  
Come to the realization  
That your version  
Of "society"  
Is manufactured  
To suit deflection

What will become of our world  
If every member removes themselves  
From the equation?

Find your truth  
Discover your accountability

What can you reasonably give back?  
Where is your energy best spent?  
Sit with this truth until it inspires an epiphany

Rest, observe, *then* contribute.

# Cleanse Me With Hyssop

Am I ready to follow You?

Tell me when to pack  
So I can focus on your calling and help  
Those who need it  
Only with your blessing

As long as it pertains to you and your plan  
If I am off-base or missing  
Something you intend  
For me to understand  
Please direct me where I need to be

I feel tired  
And frustrated  
And grouchy

I'm tired of hypocrisy

Which is a self-fulfilling prophecy  
Since, you know, free will  
And works of the flesh  
And all that

I want to spend the day with you instead

# Recovery

I realized something today  
A tendency to hide away  
Perhaps it's obvious to most but  
More so to me  
Now that I've become acquainted with  
The recesses of my memory

It fills up my mind until it escapes  
Falling from my ears if only  
To trickle over my shoulders

It's heavier than it seems  
Has anyone noticed the slouching?

They fire off affirmations of character  
Ideally to bring me back  
From my own imprisonment

Meanwhile  
The hatred overflows and drips  
It's rhythmic and continuous  
From my shoulders, it continues to crawl  
Until it has encased my arms, back, and chest

My loved ones approach  
But they cannot speak to parts of me  
I don't believe exist

If the brain is a ship  
Mine has unwittingly trapped me below deck

# Recovery

I used to fight to return or  
Call for help  
Anything  
To expedite the process  
Now I lie in wait

Whatever memory has captured me  
Will reappear  
And we will meet in this cabin  
Where there is no escape

I will listen  
Accept  
And validate

I will not approach the door until it's done

Sometimes  
When I'm busy meeting with myself  
I forget  
That my loved ones are still shouting  
Across the raging sea

Don't they know I'm protected  
By the One who saved me?

# This Anxiety

Father,

Why am I so nervous?

Please take this anxiety

It is not your will for me to feel uncertain

Or anxious

I pray that your will be done

I pray that whatever action I take

Aligns

With your ultimate truth, plan, and vision

Father,

I surrender

My insecurities and fears

Take them

Ease my burden

With the gift of comfort



# 103 Degrees

Have you ever been on fire for the Lord?  
Do you know what it's like  
To feel your soul ignite?  
What is your experience like?

What inspires you to shine?

Through every ounce of truth  
In Phillipians 4:13  
Remember James 4:17

This is what I should sit with today

# Debrief Me

We began on a whim  
An optimistic surge  
Test the waters

It felt unattainable  
Maybe that's why I leapt  
The venture was a success

So I stayed

As the days progressed to months  
Then years  
The years demanded more

The effort ate at my reserves

Time can be deceiving  
The life of a novice begins with such promise  
There's an excitement that's almost tangible

I am a creature of habit  
Cursed with curiosity and an adventurous  
Spirit  
I want to go where I am not invited  
I strive to bring light to places  
Filled with darkness

Still,  
I hadn't expected to be invested

*Debrief Me*

Everything that grows  
Has to face the soil  
It sprouted from  
I have outstayed my welcome

My roots are too deep  
This pot cannot sustain me  
I can no longer contribute  
My appetite is consuming

They wither and wilt  
But not before pointing fingers

The transfer brought me new life and  
Another surge of optimism  
I can only hope the same for them

# Trust and Control

Have you ever questioned the validity  
Of your own mind?  
Do you know what it's like  
To declare war on yourself  
Internally?

Have you ever had to fight for  
Someone that didn't want you in  
The ring?

What if that person was another  
Version of you?

What if they possessed the same character  
As the narrator  
In your head?

Could you lay your weapons down  
Every time you caught a glimpse  
Of yourself?

Imagine learning how  
To shed your armor

Would you keep it off in private?  
Could you?

# Servitude

Father,

I wish to serve you  
I don't care how it looks

What would it take to throw the money away?  
Keep in mind, I do have the little guy  
I'd need enough to survive

Maybe I should learn to step back  
Maybe I should allow you to provide

Father, how can I follow you?  
If I renounce this way of life, they will  
Discredit me

So be it  
Let them shout until their vocals fry

And should they decide  
To cast stones  
I will seek refuge in your grace

This is the part where I stop talking  
And jump...

Yes?

January

# Study The Meek

We possess an awareness  
Of spiritual inheritance  
And yet  
We can't seem to master  
Human interaction

Most people follow the loudest voice in the room  
But the Bible shows us the opposite  
Holds virtue

When I say I hold a soft spot for the meek  
I am not describing the weak  
I am referring to those who achieve  
Control over strength  
Who learn to hold their tongue  
When defamation is easier than compassion

I am favoring those  
Who pray to God  
Not for vengeance, but for forgiveness  
I can't be the only one  
Who remembers how  
Moses prayed for Miriam's health

I interpret kindness as a show of spiritual strength  
I believe we  
As Christians  
Tend to forget grace  
Forgo forgiveness  
And neglect Christ's message  
Of service

# Study The Meek

Or have we forgotten  
How he drew in the dirt  
When they brought him an adulterer

Those people cited "the law of Moses"  
God's word  
As justification  
For a premature assassination

But Jesus held true  
And the people left  
And the woman didn't meet an early grave

Where is this message today?

All I see  
Is speech filled with hate  
Spread in Jesus' name

I don't know about you  
But that is not the God I serve

Repent  
Pray  
Meditate



# Obedience

I'm sorry for hesitating  
For believing my deprecating thoughts  
Over Your wisdom and grace  
Is the same true for my calling, Lord?  
Do I dismiss you there as well?

I know You will never place me  
Somewhere I can't withstand  
I know you walk where I can't  
I know if I asked - and it aligned  
With your will -  
You would carry me to those places

I know Your patience  
Love and mercy  
Exceed my understanding

I'm sorry for doubting  
I'm sorry for losing faith  
Like Peter  
Sinking beneath the water

Help me regain my footing  
So we may walk these waters together  
I don't remember where I'm supposed to go

Show me  
I'm listening

# Growing Pains

Father,

I don't sleep anymore  
There's a listlessness  
Like my skin doesn't quite fit

I'm not sure what to do  
Everything feels so minute  
This place is a state, yet  
Not as chaotic as my brain

Is this what it's like  
Being suspended in flight?  
I'm filled with discomfort  
It clouds my vision

I can't see you in the details  
My instinct is to run

But you led me here  
So I will wait  
Until the darkness is shattered  
By your light  
And my faith

*Idle Hands*

Father,

I have sought safety  
And received grace  
I have been enveloped by white wings  
And lifted  
To spare my feet

But the mind can be a dangerous place  
Is that why you requested  
This period of rest?  
For me to become acquainted with myself  
To heal in ways I never thought possible  
To be victorious in my own hell?

Memories can be cruel  
Last night my sanity escaped  
And the walls, they fell  
In the shape of a cage

I like the parts of me I've come to know

But how painful it is  
To go back in time  
If only to sit with a younger me  
And cry

# Hunger and War

There's this hunger  
It consumes and lingers

It can't be fed by the local church  
Online sermons are a reprieve  
But their effect is temporary

How can I satiate this aching?  
Will nothing suffice?

Father,  
I came to you  
And you told me to write

Except nothing seems to matter  
Is change out of reach?  
The world's simply ceased

My hope, like my heart,  
Aches and bleeds  
With each plea  
Uttered in the form of a prayer

These are your children out there

What am I supposed to see?  
What am I missing?  
How am I supposed to aid  
An infinite suffering?

# The Evangelists

Before there was knowledge  
Of bright bugs  
In cloudy glass

There were three conversations  
With opportunities  
To turn back

If I had, perhaps  
This book wouldn't exist  
We'll consider it a win  
For the Evangelists

# Fireflies

Born into darkness  
With wide, blinking eyes  
Curious and bright  
They're beacons of light

Picture a jar  
With its lid screwed on tight  
And a few bugs just buzzing  
Butts burning through the night

What good are wings  
If their reach is prohibited?  
A prison is a prison  
Regardless of intentions

I'll ask one time  
Out of curiosity and wonder  
Why are you hiding behind all that glass?  
Is it stage fright?  
A layer of protection?

Tell me  
What keeps you from joining them?

February

# In Reflection

Movement

Comes in many forms

Like

Blotches of golden light dancing

Across shimmering green leaves

Like

Branches that sweep gradually

With the breeze

Like

Dogs pulling on their leash

All they want is to discover

Something new, interesting

In the morning

When the birds sing

I'm struck by how important silence is

Everything has noise, movement, a fingerprint

If it all happened at once

We'd never retain it

But here I am

In this world You built

I'm amazed by your craftsmanship

It's humbling to know you

I'm eager to learn still



# I Think I Know

Look what I've found  
Or rather  
What you gave me

There's an atmosphere  
They're young, but devoted  
They move with the purest intentions

They are not my crowd  
But I'm drawn to the change  
They aspire to obtain

I am old, strong, *vivid* in my devotion

I think I get it

I think I know

But just to be sure  
If I'm wrong  
Send me home

# The Path You've Set

Father,

I am grateful  
For all you've given

Thank you  
For showering me in your compassion  
For providing guidance  
For teaching me to counsel  
Then leading me to teach

I want to tackle all my challenges  
With a clear head  
A pure heart  
The wisdom to follow

The path you've set

Interrupt my day  
Disrupt my plans  
Open my eyes  
Guide me to your vision

There is grace here  
As my anger frays

Joy erupts from darkness  
Love envelopes  
Growing pains

Peace be with those  
That learn to take rest  
That welcome solitude  
To be alone  
With you

Overcome  
With gratitude

Understanding  
That destruction  
Is on its way

Driven by pride  
Blinded by greed  
Enacted in vain

I'd like to sit  
With you  
Today

Beam

# Into Step

Father,

It is my honor  
To fall into step

Show me where to go  
Lead me in your time

I will wait  
I will be steadfast in my faith

When your will permits  
We'll begin  
With a faith  
That conquers  
And heals

Amen

# Author's Note

Dear reader,

In late 2022 I was released from a mission I had been assigned to for six and a half years. Although I knew it was coming, to say it was an easy transition would be ludicrous. I went from working 24/7 in high stress situations to absolutely nothing. It was a shock to my system.

I wasn't sure what to do with myself. What I did know was that I wanted out. By that point in my life, I'd been a devoted, born-again Christian for thirteen years. All I wanted was to work somewhere I could incorporate my faith. Despite wanting and praying for this for several years, I had no idea what it would look like.

So I did what I always do. Which is to say I wrote...a lot. Those writings were transferred from a million pieces of scrap paper, text messages, and photographs of convoluted phrases scrawled across my forearms. Additionally, I tracked down all my prayers, which were recorded across diary entries, bible study notes, and voice memos.

Change can be incredibly difficult, but the human spirit is resilient. As scripture reminds us, with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

If this book can help at least one person out there, then I've done my job.

Peace be with you.

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people" - Titus 2:11 NIV

Father,

I bring this prayer to you, for whoever may need it. Regardless if the participant is a reader, someone who knows the reader, or even a stranger walking down the street. Father, I know your desire is to unite with your children. I see all you've sacrificed to be closer to us, to give us the opportunity to get to know you.

I am delighted to be in your presence. To know that you walk before us, with us, and carry us when we cannot go on. It is through your kind and compassionate spirit that we know of salvation, and through your sacrifice that it is available.

Thank you.

And thank you for everything you've done for the reader today. Thank you for lifting them up so that their foot doesn't strike a rock. Thank you for loving them, not despite or in spite of their flaws, but because your love is unconditional, everlasting.

We love you, we love you, we love you.

"And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains." - Colossians 4:3 NIV

A Prayer

# About The Author



As a writer and illustrator, Bethanie Sherwood uses her work to ask and answer questions (without sacrificing fun, of course!).

In her past life, Beth worked as a retail employee, assistant coach, cake decorator, and crisis interventionist. Currently, she describes her status as 'on God's payroll' and works as a freelance creative.

*Thank you!*