

“Will you be brave?”

The seamstress and her pricked index, sewing pearl onto white silk.

The soldier in maroon seawater, clutching at his locket.

The sheikh's embroidered black robe, wrapping the serial sinner in pardon.

The corporate girl donating liver and salary to her family between meetings.

The teenage Swiftie, sobbing in bed to Peter, still hoping for a better love.

The son, in a sandy cemetery, picturing his father beside him instead of below.

but will I be brave?

Med school didn't prepare him for love through plastic & victims piled on the floor.

At 18, he hadn't even experienced the nation he'd just died for.

Anxious about SATs, she didn't expect the rocket to fly through her bedroom window.

She had to starve to win, walked the runway like a gaunt ghost's shadow.

Amber alert, he tucked the puppy in the pickup — displaced, time to sleep in the trunk.

Red Sea, he was so excited to get the new dining set home to Cairo until they both sunk.

but will I be brave?

I listen to his voice over the phone, after gym.

He tells me about himself, his mum and his favorite cousin.

His text makes me smile, so I read it twice, I don't skim.

I'm interested, but my attitude about risking hearts is grim.

Our chemistry that night, oh, shit, and the martini – full brim.

Yet I hesitate, hopeless against my impenetrable defenses. I want him.

but will I be brave?

Some fight, survive.

They face horrors, plow through.

Some love and lose, knowing they'll gain.

They look at skies & hear sirens.

Some look down, see duty.

They live loud, stubborn, defiant.

My heroes, so able.

but will I be brave?

If I could use and sharpen

this heart instead of my pen, —

keep its scared chambers wide open,

look at him, melt and soften —

I would, I'd rearrange my entire origin,

to be one of the heroes — the 'I truly love you' men.

& I will be?