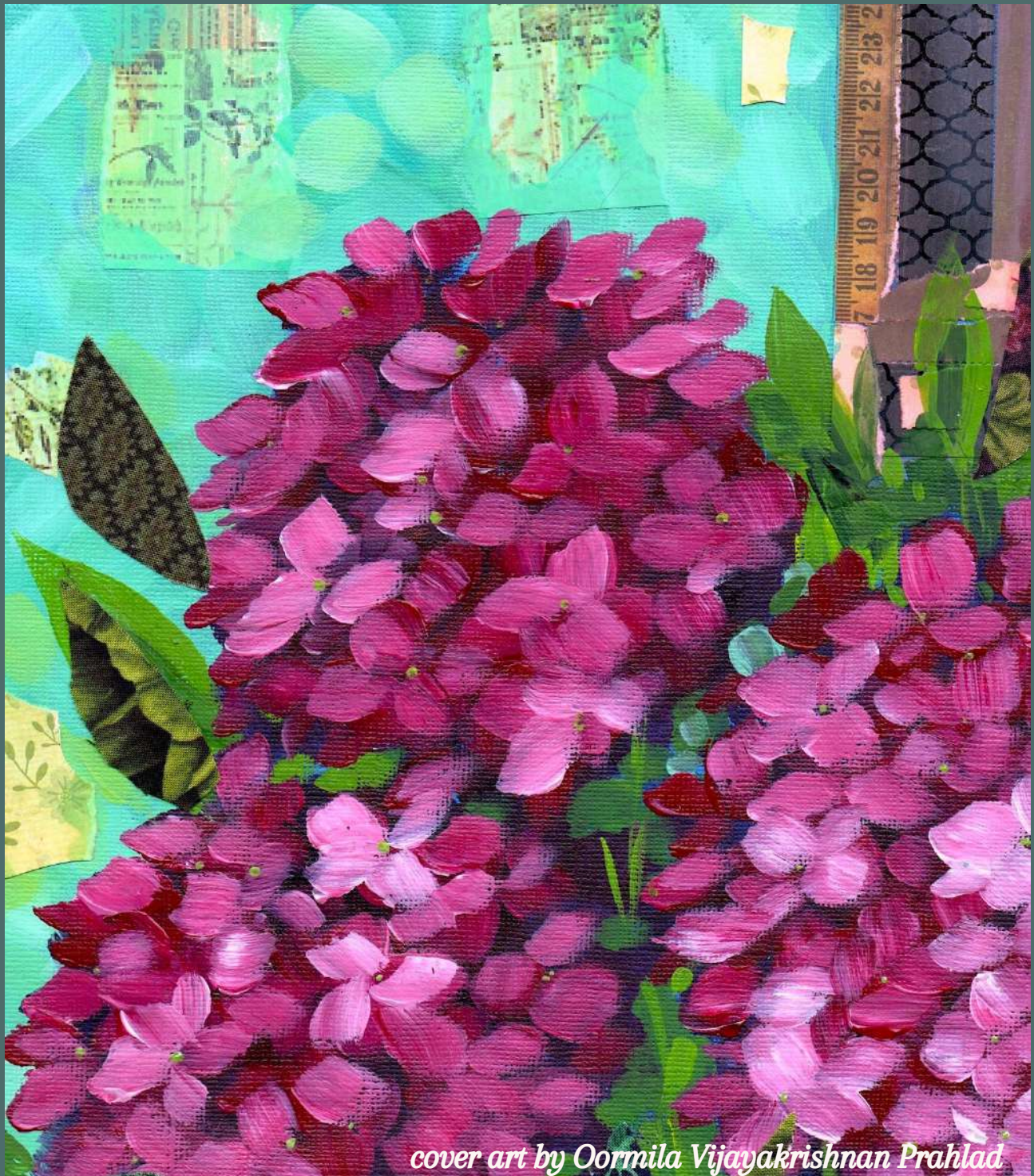


issue 01

# CHASING SHADOWS

poetry prose art interviews



*cover art by Oormila Vijayakrishnan Prahlad*

*warfreude*

*june 2021*



**vorfreude**

*the joyful intense  
anticipation that  
comes from imagining  
future pleasures*

# CHASING SHADOWS

*issue 01 - vorfreude*



Editors:

Halin Roche

Mariachiara Faraon

Cover art by Oormila Vijayakrishnan Prahlad

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## editor's notes

*this year, we have turned towards the literary and the artistic more so than any other period. the isolation and unpredictable times put us through self-reflection. each one of us must have gone through extended periods of solitude and anticipation- for the retrieval of normalcy, better days, and the good times. the tendency to look forward to things is nothing unusual; every human yearns and longs for the things they don't have at the moment.*

*and this inaugural issue of chasing shadows looks at the canvas of vorfreude- joyful anticipation. vorfreude is one of my favorite words, a word which i constantly scribble in my notebooks, more than my name. i like the sound of it, and what it stands for. not all works that you will see in the following pages are "joyful" because the past year has not just allowed that. but that said, the works do hide certain anticipation in them and a call for hope. they find a voice despite the adversity.*

*this issue is an amalgamation of works contributed by 54 creatives from around the world. when we first announced the theme, i and my co-editor mariachiara hardly thought we would receive this huge response. but here we are, having created an issue that uncovers the layers of memories, emotions, yearning, and the surreal.*

*from poetry, prose, art, and photography, this first issue of chasing shadows invites you to ask yourself one question: what is your ideal vorfreude?*

*- halin roche  
founder & eic*

# CHASING SHADOWS

*issue 01 - vorfreude*

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<b>clay hunt</b>	edward lee
<b>regine ebner</b>	anacia sessoms
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<b>doug van hooser</b>	oormila vijayakrishnan prahlad
<b>leo kang</b>	deidre darby
<b>ainsley berg</b>	skye morandin
<b>huda merchant</b>	edward studeez



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# CHASING SHADOWS X HUDA MERCHANT - AN INTERVIEW

*Jeddah Reads intends to inspire the people of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to pick up reading. It was founded by Huda Merchant in 2016 when she became aware of the sad fact that many schools in the city didn't have a library. She created the initiative to sow the habit of reading and inspire the city to read and inculcate literary activities. We at Chasing Shadows are happy to have interviewed the founder for this inaugural issue and give her initiative the best exposure amidst our readers.*

**Hello Huda. Nice to have you here. Can you please introduce yourself and *Jeddah Reads*?**

Hi, thanks for having me in your magazine! I'm a twenty-five-year-old woman currently based out of Bangalore. However, I was born and raised (well, for the most part of it) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Professionally speaking, I work for the brand marketing team of a start-up here and I've pretty much been in the media, advertising, and marketing industry for the past five years. On the personal front, I'm an avid reader, writer, and well, currently... also a new mom!

*Jeddah Reads* is a nonprofit organization and community back home in Jeddah, that I started around 2014 while I was still in university. The aim of this nonprofit is simple: to promote an active reading and literary culture in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. We do this primarily through different projects, events, and collaborations.

**That's interesting. We are glad to know that you have taken such an initiative to promote reading among the citizens of Jeddah. When and how did the idea to start this amazing initiative pop up in your mind?**

It was back during my college days, during a social internship that I was asked to think about the different social problems in Jeddah. During this research, I found that there was a significant lack of a reading culture in

Jeddah. So much so that 70% of schools didn't even have a library! That's when the idea was planted. I initially started it as a social media account to inspire people and eventually, post-college in 2016 is when I took it up more actively and built it to what it is today.

**You have done amazing work in giving an impetus to students towards reading. Were there any difficulties in the initial stages when the initiative was introduced?**

Yes, definitely. Right from just figuring where to start from, especially in a culturally diverse place like Saudi. It was difficult to just figure our audience out, bridge language and cultural barriers, and get things started. Additionally, there were a lot of people and organizations who didn't care about the cause much which led to the halt of some projects.

**We can understand that. In what ways does *Jeddah Reads* try to promote the literary movement in Saudi?**

So there are primarily three ways we approach our initiative; 1 - by building independent projects which can address individual problems. For example: we have our *Junior Readers* project which is targeted at inspiring reading from a young age through an interactive book club and children's library while our other project, *Libraries for Jeddah* is targeted at building libraries and reading corners in schools and cafes. 2- by organizing various



### ***Huda Merchant- Founder, Jeddah Reads***

events and workshops to help build the literary culture in Jeddah. A few years back, there were hardly any literary events in the city and we wanted to change that with this initiative. So right from book launches, creative workshops to talks; we organize them all. 3- by collaborating with both local and international players. For example: one of our favorite collaborations has been with the *Book Fairies Worldwide*, through which we launched the book fairies in Jeddah too.

**All these activities would have surely made a great impact! Did the pandemic have any effect on the initiative? If yes, then how did you try to alleviate the issues?**

Yes, it has. In a huge way! Given that a lot of our activities have been on-ground, the pandemic has had a big effect on us. We haven't been able to run any on-ground events or workshops since March 2020 and even our children's book club and the library had to be put on a pause for a while. Additionally, our team members also have day jobs and with the pandemic also had to spend

time homeschooling their children. This took away a lot of the free time they had, slowing things down with us. However, I do think that's okay given the challenging times we're living in, I think it's not a big deal and once things get better, we'll be back and better! The way we tried to combat this is by pretty much doing what everyone is doing, taking it online. So we did run a couple of our events online, did a bunch of literary live series on Instagram, and even took the children's book club over zoom for a few months.

Additionally, we also launched an adult book club to help navigate the uncertainty of the pandemic through the power of relevant books.

**We are pleased to hear that the unfortunate times didn't halt the initiative from spreading joy. How will *Jeddah Reads* be in the coming months/years? Where do you see the initiative moving towards?**

Given the uncertainty, I don't know how to answer this! Currently, I aim to better our online initiatives and once things are normal, I would like to scale our existing projects and collaborations further and perhaps even do them in a better manner with time.

**That's great! Is there any way for our readers to become a part of *Jeddah Reads*?**

Recently, we have launched something called *Jeddah Writes*, a platform for local young writers and poets to submit essays, stories, and poems. This is still in its nascent stage so submissions are welcome! Anyone interested can write to us at [jeddahreads@gmail.com](mailto:jeddahreads@gmail.com).

**What's your message to our *Chasing Shadows Magazine* readers?**

Keep reading! Given today's digital age, it's something we need to cherish so much more!

# Escape

- *Anumm Habib*



# AT SEA

## - *Dionysus*

My eyes batter, flies around the room  
Searching for a type of nectar  
sweet: glory, hope, friendship? Somewhat alike tombs  
brandished with layers of cedar, mud, ash...

Come into being of sight, my love.  
My eyes need to rest and my heart wishes to take flight  
Asunder the ocean waves and let it trove  
Darling, it will be alright. I await for your vow,  
hoping you will enjoy this moment more than I am now.

# Vorfreude

- Samina Parveen

*i was anticipating rainbow colors to fill my life.*

red was supposed to be my lehenga,  
fluttering & radiating as much as your smile, and roses  
but now red is your blood, flooding my thoughts on anxious nights,  
i know you are gone,  
our love was like a burning garden,  
it's spreading and sophisticated  
dreamy but destroying,  
gleaming but gloomy

yellow was supposed to be the daisy & dandelion flowers,  
decorating my home, and yellow jumpsuit when i first met you, the sunny  
days, when we would sit on the terrace, sipping tangy orange juice,  
but yellow is the shirt which you wore in the hospital room when i last saw  
you, i know you are gone  
our love was like a burning garden  
it's bright but bitter  
pleasing but painful  
tempting but terrifying

orange was autumn, warm like your poetry floating on my thoughts  
miranda orange soda, and the clicks of your polaroid camera,  
the bright lipgloss, which you would have got for me,  
but now orange is my journal, where I write my agony  
i wish you could see it  
i know you are gone  
our love was like a burning garden  
it's dazzling but distressing  
magnificent but miserable  
fancy but flickering

green was supposed to be Christmas and Eid, surrounding our home,  
you remember the small green plant you potted with a time capsule,  
the surreal streets, we were dancing just like La La Land,  
but green is now your memories, like dried autumn leaves,  
my empty prayers, my worship, my faith, my last wish,  
i know you are gone  
our love was like a burning garden  
it's happy but haunting  
satisfying but silly  
lovely but lightning

pink was the memories we build together on camelia dawn  
and reflections of your window glass, it was pastel-like small stickers on your  
guitar,  
my hair was pink when I met you  
but now it's pitch black like midnights when I lost you  
i know you are gone  
our love was like a burning garden  
it's very vivacious but vicious  
exciting but eccentric

black is concealing the memories,  
and I thought of making my home with you,  
where tranquility prevails in our terrace,  
heavenly hill will bless us with spring flowers, cherry blossoms will wake us  
up,  
it would have been like a Disney movie,  
but the book of you and i decided to end on an empty page,  
but now i am tired  
of searching you like a star, in pitch darkness, a sweet little tear for you, the  
black hairband you had left,  
you had taught me to make an eyeliner wing, that has washed away,

i know you are gone  
Our love was like a burning garden,  
it's like breathing carbon, it's a slow death,  
it's fear but you were so dear,

i don't care if i settle down like the rainbow after this flood.

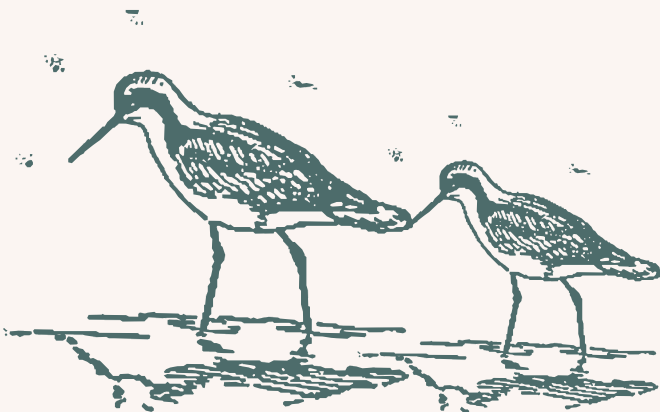
*vorfreude*

# Joining the water birds

- *L J Ireton*

I wait  
To grace the wild waters  
Where geese glide under trees  
And small fish hide from shadows.

I imagine the Sun  
Redeeming my cold limbs  
As I swim without any ceiling  
Feeling the air and light and liquid  
The way other creatures know them.  
I want to learn the history of the earth  
By joining the water birds  
In the place where buildings  
Were never made -  
Where mirrors are as  
Soft as the sky.



# Petting Zoo

- DeShane Short

September :

Each layer of my hair is sewn on the top of my scalp, while my appearance is weighted more than my college degree or the years of working experience. A woman at work stares directly at my hair, compares its textures to hers. She asks: Is that your real hair? Then proceeds to fondle her claws into my hair, like petting a monkey.

December :

I have my hair in cornrows. Every row is braided tight for the world of racism that turns it coarse. My braids swing side to side to throw away the discrimination coming forth. People gravitate around, pricking their hands down my braids, as they whisper: I see you trying to represent Africa. I wonder if my hair can be braided in this way. Girl, you look so ratchet. They smile to mask the discomfort of their ignorance.

March :

I iron the curliness out my hair, every curl burns to connect 16 inches, eventually slicked back, wrapped up, squeezed into a bun. Not trying to frighten the white people whose hair is falling out. Multiple comments: Trying to get that good hair I see; you got those white people genes. A man creeps up, presses his hand on my bun as he says: Oh my gosh it's so soft, It feels like a poodle, it's so soft. It didn't know your hair could grow like that.

June :

I come into work with all my curls laid upon my head, each curl blessed by generations of ancestors now dancing with the angels, who chose courage instead of assimilating. Faces around me are in disgust; my hair is too natural for them, too real for them, too black for them! Women scurry closer, but I say, don't touch my hair!



The background of the page is a collage of historical maps, likely from the 18th or 19th century, featuring intricate Arabic calligraphy and geographical details. The maps are layered and partially obscured by a dark blue semi-transparent rectangle that serves as a backdrop for the text.

## Ancestry DNA - Case File DeShane Vondre Short

- *DeShane Short*

I am constructed from the twenty-two percent of English, Welsh, Northwestern ancestries who invaded my one percent Chickahominy Native American tribe's land. Scheming, raping, and wiping out majority of its kind, history mocks their tribal dances and characterizes in headdresses, breechcloths, and cloaks to celebrate the fact, they live on stolen property.

I am constructed from the four percent Irish who fled famine, only to enter a war started by racism and white privilege. Battling endless nights to maintain their Catholic faith only to gain and accept white privilege towards the end.

I am constructed from the ten percent Ivory Coast, Ghana bones whose empire was crumbled by the hunger of salt, now the Ashanti people banging on talking drums, praying for rain to pour down into their mouths. Waiting for the return of James Madison University students to teach Ashanti children how to write their own names.

# Trail of thought

- *Oli Davies*

That car is blue.  
I like that type,  
A shade metallic  
I bet its automatic.

Such a busy road  
Lays thoughts upon, up  
And over yonder  
Wait. Was it Hyundai  
Or was it a Honda?

Framed beside the lane  
Stood long, backpack on,  
Nothing would be different  
Nor change  
If I were placed different  
Or the same,

Life's exchanges constant  
In their frivolous lack  
Of pattern,  
Unaffected by my  
Pre-existence and post,  
Lost  
Will be my identity:  
All that remains is writing.

Eternal? Perhaps not  
Stood short at this bus stop,  
It is only words that leave breadcrumbs...

Actually, I could do with a sandwich.

# The Sweet Scented Lilies, Soup and Music



– *Tanvi Nagar*

I  
We strung together the sweet scented lilac lilies with perfection  
and laced the low hanging air of despair with your magical melodies.  
The red, blue and green lines on the screens fluctuated freely  
tirelessly racing rhythmically- as if creating their own music.  
The aroma of light-yellow luscious lamb soup escaped from the bowl  
as if racing to reach the tiled, square white ceiling first;

II  
My glassy eyes, stayed fixed upon the skeleton before me- bones, flesh and a little you,  
encased in a coffin of peachy pale skin and numerous twisted tubes;  
the incisions in your skin fresh- with little red droplets of blood that oozed out made my heart  
beat faster; fluttering like a kite in the sky before its string is cut.  
the skin in your hands and feet hung loose and lifeless  
which made it harder to imagine how blood was gushing underneath this  
sheet,  
there was so much movement in the molecules of your being  
yet, so much stillness in the spirit of your existence.  
your eyelids were shut closed, concealing the gateway to your universe within,  
like the white sheet that covered the scars the sharp needles left on your body.

### III

We strung together the sweet scented lilac lilies with perfection  
and laced the low hanging air of despair with your magical melodies.  
The red, blue and green lines on the screens fluctuated freely  
tirelessly racing rhythmically- as if creating their own music.  
The aroma of light-yellow luscious lamb soup escaped from the bowl  
as if racing to reach the tiled, square white ceiling first;  
It was hard to imagine life of a human, so powerful yet dangerously delicate-  
hanging on the monitors, meters, measures.  
It was still more hard to imagine what pulling the plug from a socket  
can do to the one hanging on it like threads of loose cloth ripped at the ends.

### IV

The lilac lilies danced in farewell, to some sad song it seemed  
the monitors beating slower, slower and slower still  
with their constant repeating beat- beep.  
the waves resounded and repeated  
until the notes on the screen  
refused to go up and down  
and the fumes from  
the soup didn't  
escape at  
all.



# Faded

- *Tanvi Nagar*

The warm yellow sunshine-  
fire from the golden medallion  
it's orange-red fiery fangs  
reaching out towards the earth  
pouring in through slits of the horizon  
where the clouds don't cover the lands  
and the mountain tops don't reach,  
kissed my forehead and tanned my hands  
and then bounced off the photograph  
that was held in the clasp of my sweaty  
palms.  
Its brownish coffee-coloured edges  
tested by the toughest times  
and the yellowness set into the frame  
made the faces in the picture seem more  
alive.

The two girls-hand in hand  
their soft faces lit up by stunning smiles  
looked directly into the camera  
as if staring straight into my eyes.  
Maybe it was a mirror, one its kind-  
for I was able to look into my eyes  
from so many years ago  
yet, not fully recognise the little girl  
I saw in the faded photo.  
Amid the smudged background  
and the shoreline of the beach  
I could make out my father's figure-  
admiring his two daughters by the beach.

My mother behind the lens  
captured this moment into a frame  
yet was missing from the shot  
like some of the fleeting passerbys' hands  
who were somehow silhouettes in my past  
and yet, nothing more than that.  
Sitting on the same spot at the beach  
looking at the sun fall into the horizon  
as if simply sliding by into another world  
carrying away the day's secrets,  
and the clouds breaking and crumbling-  
colouring the sky with varied hues,  
all whilst my hands held the course grains of the sand  
and I paced into the past and ran back as fast  
into the present world of mine.

The gentle wind touched my forehead  
and the water splashed onto my feet  
What if these were the same droplets of water  
that were captured in the photograph?  
Maybe, I held the same sand in my hands too.  
But the people in the frame-  
they couldn't ever remain preserved in that time.  
They were simply remnants of my past and  
just like the photograph in my hands,  
they were blurred, faded and damaged,  
yet alive-  
inside the chambers of my mind.



**This morning**

- *Edward Lee*

# Cardboard Ballet

- Will Nuessle

“Five minutes to curtain, dancers,” Miss Cindy called into the warm-up room.

“Thank you, five,” the room responded automatically, though Katriona only mouthed the words. She leaned over the metal barre, pressing her cheek into her instep, stretching leg muscles that did not need to be stretched.

The stupid virus.

It had taken her graduation, it had taken her summer abroad and now it had taken her audience.

They had been allowed fifty spectators, and then the week before that number had been cut to twenty-five, though Grandpapa had been happy to claim the one ticket Katriona was free to bestow.

Then the day before the word had come down:  
no audience whatsoever.

Grandpapa had cheerfully arranged to watch the streamed performance next door with Neighbor C.J.; he could still see her.

But she would not be able to see him.

Nobody knew her secret. She had been allowed to keep the triple pirouette in her routine, even though she always stumbled on the third spin in rehearsal because she always nailed it in performance.

Nobody knew that on that third spin Katriona would see her Grandpapa in the audience, and he would wink at her, and her back would be straighter, her leg muscles stronger.

There was no way she could nail her pirouette tonight.

A commotion beyond the warm up room; something happening on-stage. Dancers whispered excitedly to each other out of habit. The hushed voices were unnecessary; there was after all no audience. Katriona left the barre and followed the crowd, turning the corner to see the stage, to see beyond, into the empty seats...

Which were, surprisingly, not empty.

Someone had brought cardboard cutouts and scattered them through the theater. There were parents, and friends, even household pets...

Among the chatter of her fellow dancers, Katriona's mask-muffled sob went unnoticed. She blinked quickly, not wanting her mascara to smear.

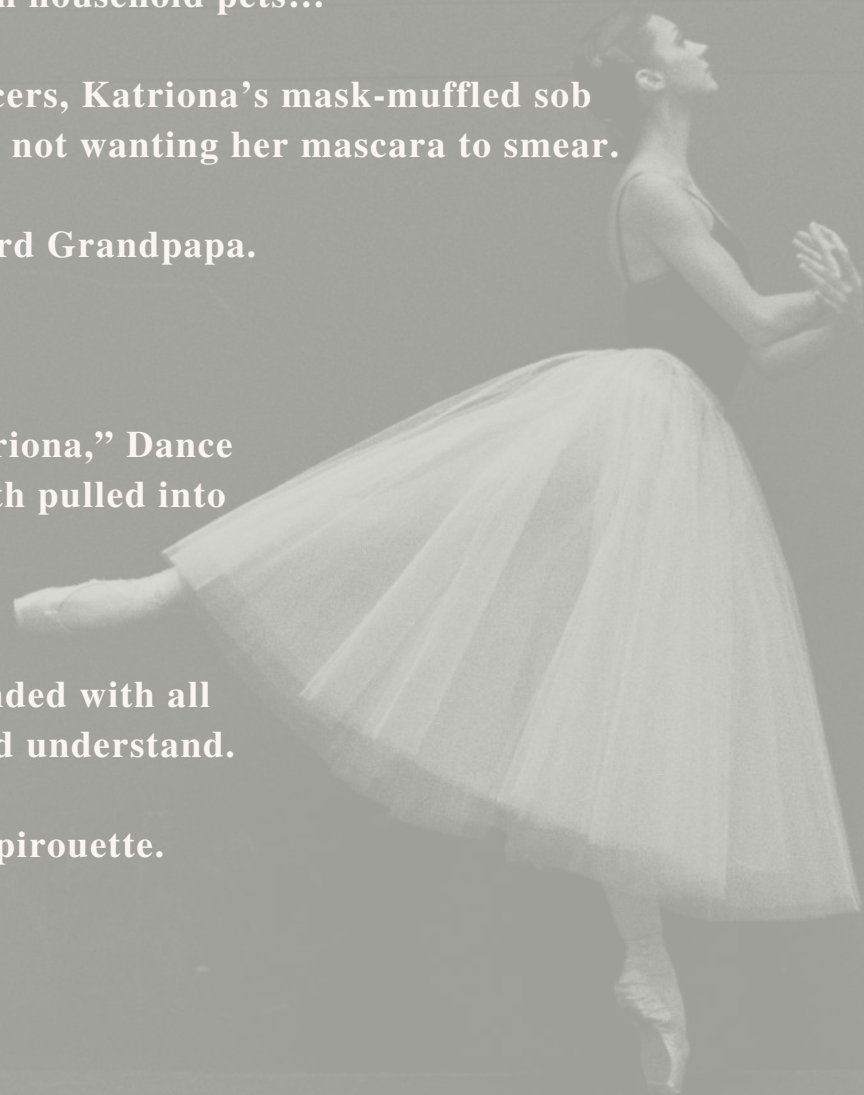
There in the fifth row was a cardboard Grandpapa.

He was winking at her.

"Three minutes to curtain, Miss Katriona," Dance teacher Cindy called softly, her mouth pulled into a rare, small smile.

"Thank you, three," Katriona responded with all of herself, knowing Miss Cindy would understand.

Twenty minutes later she nailed her pirouette.





# NOON ARIA

- Oormila Vijaykrishnan Prahlad



*"I spend time in the garden on the weekends, sketching the magpies that cavort on the grass. "Noon aria" was inspired by this favorite pastime of mine."*

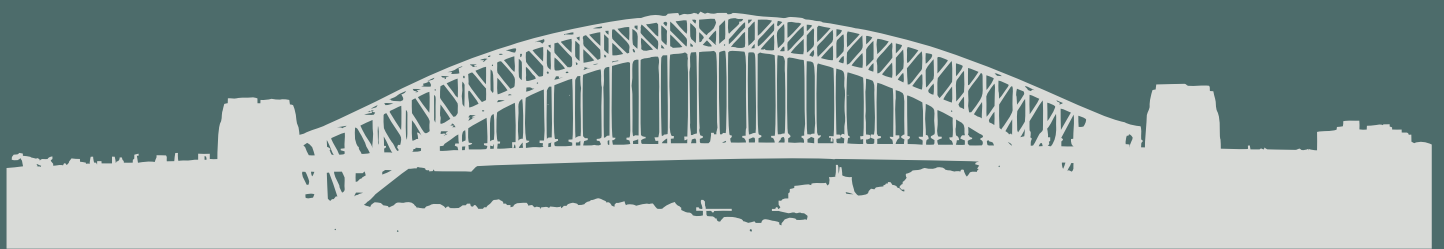
# PERSISTENCE

*-Lilli Root*

i'm walking.  
i'm walking on a bridge to nowhere.  
i'm excited, seeing the brim of the bridge  
knowing something is on the other side  
whether it's good or bad, sad or happy  
at least something is there waiting for me  
and only me.  
but when i get to the brim, i see nothing.  
there is nothing there but a reflection of myself  
reflecting my failures and desires  
my hopes and sadness.  
i feel nothing when i look at nowhere, because it is me  
and the only thing i can do  
is stare right back.

i now stand bent  
unable to look ahead  
only down.  
i try to move my eyes  
my blue eyes that look more like a cloudy day  
i move them forward, left, right  
am i frozen? is this what has become of me?  
am i doomed, damned, destined to be broken?

i stand, feeling myself for the first time.  
i feel the lethargy in my language,  
the lust between my lips.  
i feel stifled, stricken with an illness i cannot see  
but i begin walking  
towards that nowhere  
towards that reflection  
towards myself.



The side of the glass building  
and the life in its reflection  
capture a replication of nature,  
hollow, heavy, insufficient.

I find a dandelion growing in the pavement  
who says her family has lived there for generations,  
watching the grass turn into asphalt  
and learning to sprout between the cracks.

Birds fly over the streets,  
unable to land on buildings  
laced with metal spears made  
to keep their fragile feet  
away from the importance  
of steel boxes all in a line,  
full of papers and people  
and stale, empty air.

The dandelion shows me her brothers and sisters,  
all golden and laughing in the wind. They know  
the world they were given looks different now.

Air thick with smoke coils  
and strangles the rainclouds  
pouring poison in the dirt,  
molding the earth in shapes  
that look like productivity,  
like stealing a part of something  
to make better ways to kill it.  
The glass building shines  
like crystal, a mirror that takes  
its image and chokes it, and I  
ask what I could possibly do.

## Inheritance

- *Ainsley Berg*



But the dandelion sings as she grows in a line,  
making her restraints look like home. I want to cry for her,  
but she is too happy to be alive, holding out her leaves  
to catch the sunlight cascading around her small corner,  
taking the one place in the world she can make hers.

*Songs meant to be sung*  
- Ainsley Berg

Rainy evenings are a celebration if you know where to go,  
where frogs take stage on mossy stones by the pond  
and croak out their lively tales of becoming themselves,  
how they once grew legs and leapt out of the dark water  
only to find that they enjoyed its warm embrace,  
and now they wait for rain to feel that gentle touch.  
They sing out to fish in the pond, who know to never leave,  
and they sing to the newest generation of tadpoles,  
who hear the stories without listening, gazing into the swirling air  
and secretly planning how they will learn to taste it.  
When the next rainy night comes around,  
the freshly formed frogs will climb up on the rocks  
to sing of lost love with dry lungs like their parents,  
but no one who hears will mourn because they know  
the nature of a frog's life is to change and to regret  
so that the rain will have a song to fall beside.



# Water's embrace

- *Ainsley Berg*

The stream's stones have been there for years,  
but dip your shaking fingers in; the water  
moves to envelop them like it was waiting  
to accept you just as easily.

Time will separate you from the stream,  
and you may forget its touch,  
its silken hands reaching out to yours  
as if to join in prayer.

You must be the one to find it again,  
the shifting waters over those same stones  
that has lived a thousand lives,  
seasons without meeting you.

But after it has frozen over,  
after it has sprung to life again,  
touch its glassy open palm once more;  
it will remember how to hold you.

# Mornings

- *P R Augustina Mahanta*

the cuckoo in your neighbourhood sings songs to you in an unknown love language, your maa recites her early morning prayers, while your father gently strokes your cheek and says, "wake up dear... you'll be late for school", you smile while having your breakfast as your maa braids your hair, you think to yourself -

"can we be like this forever?"

you wake up to see a face sunkissed to the colour of caramel, you look at him and you can see nothing but a work of art as the sun rays fall on his freckled face, his lips part into a contagious smile as you whisper to him - "wake up baby..." he places a soft kiss on your forehead, you think to yourself -

"can we be like this forever, love?"



# *Epiphyllum Oxypetallum*

- *Nicholas Perkins*

The Princess of the Night grows  
scandent  
hopeful  
for one night of bloom.  
Each night  
her tender vines  
I tend and tune  
to sing  
when she is ready,  
for one night only.  
Such a queen.

Tonight she flowers,  
glows  
hope-filled  
and fuelled  
by phosphorescence  
pulled from Moon.  
A satellite's insta-branch  
shares her glory  
beyond her own  
fleeting reach.

For you,  
my Queen,  
I offer these  
few thoughts,  
undone,  
earthly raw,  
one night only.  
Our petals fall.





MY LOVE  
FOR FOOD-  
A PHOTO  
SERIES

- *Simran Kaur*





## *THE PICNIC I NEVER HAD*

*"As we were in the third lockdown, some of my plans vanished in the early morning fog. I had plenty of exciting plans, one of them was to have a picnic with one of my friends as I didn't see her for a long time. We did plan this picnic because I realized I never had a nice picnic, therefore my friend suggested to plan it based on my dream picnic. The picnic will have to wait and I just got sad. This sadness made me think about showcasing my dream picnic by playing around with fake food which I created with some colorful dough and to show that all this was an unfulfilled dream, I used a lens filter. I would like to showcase this project to bring together everyone, as each of us had some plans but because of lockdown and COVID-19, we cancelled those plans to protect each other. Now that we got the road maps, some of us feel more hopeful for the future. We can't wait to go outside, but we must keep wearing our masks and respecting every single regulation in order to not spread COVID-19 again."*

*Gluttony and lust are everywhere in our lives, but we are not able to recognize them as they have various forms. In general, you can find gluttony in lust, for example, when you crave your lover's kisses. There is also lust in gluttony because when you eat your food you might get messy as you touch it and fall in love while eating it at the point where you want more of it.*



*Speaking of food, people can feel it in various ways while feasting on it. Some might feel happy, in love, feel a sense of lust while eating it or after they ate it, but people can also feel sad, disgusted or even guilty depending on how they feel towards food.*

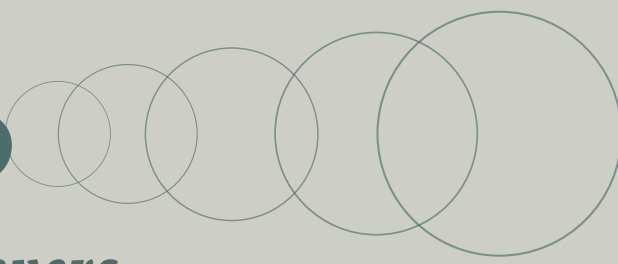




*Food can also make you feel a sense of anticipation, especially if you are in a restaurant and you order a first, a second and a dessert. While sitting at the table, your mind starts to wonder how the food might look like, will it taste good or bad, how they will compose it on the plate to impress you and make you fall in love with it before you even tasted it. The longer you wait for it, the more you crave it at the point where you wonder if you are feeling lust towards food.*



# echo



- *Riley Danvers*

I hate beginning a new menstrual cycle, the throb up where it's tightest and most warm.

Not a

cramp, a reminder of one, the first breath of one,

a pinch, a gasp inside my cervix. Not pain and not pleasure, but both, like the splintering of tree

bark after a man has thrust himself into me.

I feel this painful pinch, this punch, this pleasing splinter in the days leading up to my menses,

carefully watching for blood.

I hate this feeling.

Reminds me of who I am not, of everything I cannot have in this temple only filled with echoes.

Echoes of no pregnancies,

echoes of pregnancies I lost in 2013 and 2014, echoes of their neverness, their infinite and continuous fatality.

Echoes of me before the miscarriages, before the freezing boil, before the fantasy of pills.

I hate this feeling.

Reminds me of the echoes, builds echoes of echoes, points to the places where echoes  
echo  
loudest.

I hate cramps confessing the truth of nobabies, reminding me I don't want children,  
confessing

I will always want children.

I hate the pleasing pain that shakes the foundation of my cervical caverns, tells me echoes  
need  
somewhere to go, reminds me my blood is the river they used to escape me.

No fetus in my wombless womb now, just thorns scraping at the places where my body  
most  
betrayed me.

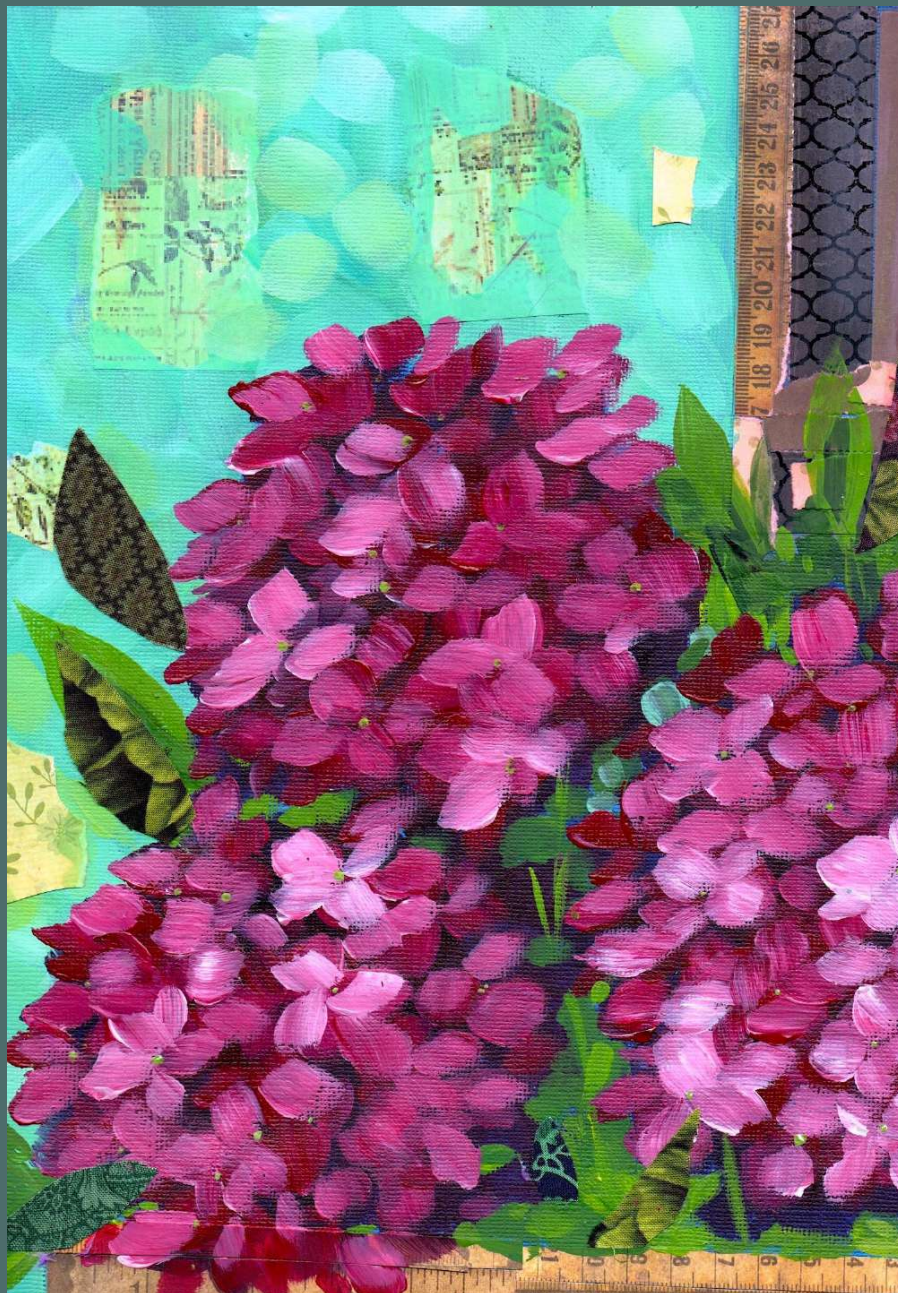
I hate this feeling.

Reminds me these echoes will always echo themselves echoing themselves echoing this  
body

always escaping itself

because

this body is the echoing,  
this body is the echoing,  
this body is the echoing...



## *The showstoppers will arrive*

- Oormila Vijayakishnan Prahlad

*"As a child, I remember my grandfather tending to the vibrant hydrangeas in his garden. My neighbor is a keen gardener and recently brought home a pot of hydrangea seedlings. She says that the blooms will be a bright purple-magenta. I can't wait to see them. "The showstoppers will arrive" is about anticipating these flowers."*

Do you know how to watch a dream slither out of your  
body?

To feel thorns on the stem of the rose  
that should be blooming in you but instead is

blooming out of you scratch on your most tender hopes?

Do you know how to look

down at your compass and see only

the places you've already been? To

watch your coordinates diverge

into thickets where

blooming roses only

bleed?

## Pregnancy-How-Not-To-Guide

– Riley Danvers

# Silence before the avalanche

- Riley Danvers

I walked into the obstetrician's exam room and I smelled freshly fallen snow. It was then I knew I was climbing a mountain about to erupt with ice and glass. It was eight weeks since my last period, and even the OB's tired smile foretold what would crawl out of my endometrium. Lay back, she said, and lift up your shirt. A breast exam, her fingers cold like the snowflakes on my tongue. Stimulated nipples that wouldn't peak under her gentle twists. If you want to breastfeed, you'll have to use a nipple shield. Your baby won't latch without it. My body was a snowglobe holding in a blizzard. Even my nipples seemed to understand the freezing truth: I could not hold motherhood inside my skin. Sometimes language is a bulb of glass, burnt pockets of ice among crimson petals blooming toward snowdrifts.

Sometimes the blooming is only meant to topple you.

## I cannot carry these fists

- Riley Danvers

I can only think of sticky  
merlot clots flooding  
a wave slithering over my sails.

I wanted to punch someone,  
but who was there to blame  
with my balled-up fists?

This is a memory  
I cannot stop reliving.

It makes me unhinge my  
jaw and cry out to the moon  
that stole from me.

It's a beautiful breakdown.  
A toppling.  
A shedding of bones and flesh.



# Thirty-five years

- *Clay Hunt*

I don't know how to write a love poem.  
I don't know the philosophy.  
I am not into noticing pairs in nature  
or watching mountains kiss stuff.  
I do cherish the time we  
watched an accidental sunset at Bernal,  
ate Whiz Burger in a parking lot, and  
played hangman in your Subaru by the  
beach.  
I knew I loved you that day.  
The ocean mingled with my river of  
thought.  
The night whispered in our ears,  
letting us see  
that our minds kissed  
and a few days later, our bodies did as  
well.  
I wonder if when thirty-five years go by,  
would you still kiss me?

# An Ode to my interest boards

- Megan Pitt

This is an ode to my pinterest boards, a simple note to acknowledge their power and the vulnerability of my soul that they share.

8:30am.

MP, board #1 has been created.

MP, board #1 has been named "Life On The Other Side of High School"

My mother sneaks into my bedroom in the wee hours of the morning, combing my white graduation cap into my golden hair. She wipes tears from her eyes, reminiscing on my youth.

I am left alone for a moment, admiring the dimple above my cheekbone and the way it is highlighted when I smile. I admire the gentle creases in my hair, from the pillow in which I nestled into at 3am as I struggled to fall asleep. I admire the way my fingernails have been painted, a cream color with light strokes of pink. My cousin had stayed the night, strewn across my bedroom floor with her beloved nail art kit held closely to her collarbone. She had recalled her graduation, allowed me to indulge in the stories of the afterparties she went to and the gifts she had received. I remember her stories and I smile; my dimple is accentuated.

My mother enters, once again. Her hands are earthy, callused. A photo book is held between each finger. Recreating a scene from Mamma Mia, the two of us rest in an armchair uncovering each page like gems in a cave. My delicate toes rest upon hers, and she giggles as we stare at an image of me dressed in a bath robe and sunglasses. Her laugh sounds like sunlight, like jumping into the ocean on a hot day. It sounds like s'mores by a bonfire and watching Christmas movies over holiday break. It sounds like bike rides in the spring and kisses before bedtime. I wonder if I will miss these things; I allow each memory to seep into my hippocampus, praying they'll stay there forever.

I walk across the stage to receive my diploma. My eyes catch my mother's, my father's, and then my grandmother's. I am blown kisses, by significant others and older friends. I am envied by younger siblings and younger cousins. I turn my tassel; I throw my cap into the air.

My feet squish into the carpet my father put in during my sophomore year; it is hard now from the aggressive paws of my dogs and the way they have worn it down over the years. My hands trace the railings and their chipped paint. No matter how hard my mother tried, the paint always chipped. I laugh and I wonder. *Will there be chipped railings in Paris?* My hands migrate to my neck, the necklace resting upon my chest. It had been a gift from my younger sister; she had snuck into my bedroom at midnight to give it to me. It hadn't been wrapped, just held in her palms--her tiny, sweat-covered palms. Along one side our names are printed and it feels odd, as if I

have never seen the two next to each other before. Suddenly, I yearn to see them like that again. Again and again. On the other side, the newfound distance between us is written. *4,000 miles.*

I board the plane alone; I take a seat alone. I miss my family. I'm excited to see my new home, Paris.

**9:30am.**

**MP, board #2 has been created.**

**MP, board #2 has been named "You and Me Under The Eiffel Tower"**

My boyfriend's foot brushes against mine, under the woolen comforter that we share. He turns to face me, his hazel eyes the first thing I see upon waking up from my slumber. His hands run through his dark hair as he yawns so widely I can see the silver caps the dentist placed upon his back molars.

My long hair is tied back into a ponytail, so low that it itches my neck like hay. I climb out of the bed, surrendering the warmth of the sheets for a cup of coffee. My boyfriend likes his black, which is why I was drawn to him in the first place--so simple. I pour an absurd amount of cream into mine, smiling at the differences between the two of us, the ones I love so much.

He slurs my name, as if he is still drunk on last night's whiskey. I hand him his coffee, a faint red mark appearing on my palm from the heat radiating from the mug. He rubs the mark, kissing it with his dark pink lips that were laid upon mine late last night.

Back in bed beside him, I open the poetry book that has taken shelter on my nightstand. Aloud, I read him my favorite French poem as he gazes out of our apartment's small window at a view of the Arc de Triomphe.

"Quand je suis triste, je pense à vous, comme l'hiver on pense au soleil, et quand je suis gai, je pense à vous, comme en plein soleil on pense à l'ombre" - Victor Hugo

My head falls back onto his chest, bobbing up and down as he breaths. I trace each vein on his hand back to his wrist, admiring their gentle curves as if they are tiny rivers. His blood is flowing to his heart, like salt water to the sea.

Entangled in my arms, he pulls away leaving me a mess of blonde hair and satin pajamas. His arm reaches across his body and it returns, clutching a black box between each finger. He rubs it, as if it is a bottle and he is a genie. As if, the box shall bring him all he desires.

*Will you marry me?*

**10:30am.**

**MP, board #3 has been created.**

**MP, board #3 has been named "Our bloodline, our offspring, our loves"**

They climb into my bed at night. Margot's tiny hands always find mine, beneath the comforter and I can feel her body against mine as she nestles in. Ru likes to lay with my husband, her head resting against his shoulder as she dreams of blueberry

pancakes on Sunday mornings.

They wake with the sun, their tiny bodies flailing around in Disney pajamas and pink slippers. They dance in the light beams in the hallway that make their way into our home through the stained glass window. My husband sings for them, off-key and out of harmony. He pulls me in and I can smell the coffee on his breath, the laundry detergent on his clothing.

Their backpacks are hung on the rocking chair, where I used to hold them as they fell asleep. Margot's is Cinderella; Ru's is Aurora. Inside are storybooks they like to read on the car ride home from school and bags of apples that I pack alongside pretzels and sandwiches in their blue and green lunch boxes.

They love to go to the supermarket on Friday evenings, when it's crowded and they can wander away to the ice cream aisle. They return, their grubby hands full of chunky monkey and rocky road. My husband picks them up, one in each perfectly sculpted arm, their cries bellowing through the dairy section. I waddle behind, my arm resting below my growing baby bump.

Our daughters, Margot and Ru. And soon-to-be Adelaide. I love you with the burning passion of a thousand suns.



**MASOCHISM &  
INTROSPECTION**  
- NASI

# MASOCHISM



*"Honestly, we've all cherished sadness at some point in our lives, haven't we? Shamelessly, we have to admit the addiction for the pain of that heartbreak, the holding on to a toxic situation, and how we passionately dwelled in the delta of depression. Cherishing sadness is often so much easier than letting go and moving on. Since moving on means moving away from what we like to keep so dearly to our hearts: that one person... or maybe the person we thought we were."*

# INTROSPECTION



*"Prior to every emotion there is a thought, often subconscious. The art of self-reflection is getting to know the thoughts, and bending them into a more suitable direction. Whatever that may be."*

# Sagebrush Midnight

*-Regine Ebner*

**This sagebrush midnight  
with its howling moon  
wrapped around me like a  
cerulean ghost**

**Brittlebrush fields with  
candlewood and daisies  
offered lessons in time  
to my ragdoll wanderer**

**Ocean-like storms  
growled over rocks and  
a tin horn sounded to  
welcome me home**

**I laugh as I drink  
from my  
lemonade cactus**



Light pierces an edge of myth  
glass pieces fall like arrows  
from fragile dreams

clowns dance by in a French parade

I hear April  
pirouetting off the sides of mountains  
wearing pink slippers and face paint  
tossing violets from her  
harlequin bouquet

She will be the last of our  
winterthorn days and  
scented afternoons

## **A Worthy Solitude**

*- Regine Ebner*

A marionette morning  
with a ladled sky  
spreads the honeyed jam  
of a guileless sun

With the clinking of cups  
in a worthy solitude  
I contemplate the  
before-and-after of a  
boiled wool day

The southern sun floods the window  
I pull my collar up around the draft

before June arrives early  
in a Death Valley caravan  
pulled by savage horsemen

But for now we are lost in these vales  
of verbena and marigold  
dreaming our way through  
the kaleidoscope kingdom of

April

## **Harlequin Days**

*- Regine Ebner*



I pull up the falling fields of the  
valley below  
and praise the fertile Earth  
for its quiet bounty of  
cowslip and paintbrush

I am wedded to the marmalade morning now  
And you will be calling later  
with your sunset gifts  
and frontier philosophies

# Second Chance Saturdays

- *Regine Ebner*

Our tell-tale spring  
is shedding wings like  
someone else's daydreams  
asking the chivalrous moon  
to lay down a landscape  
of new chances  
losses piling up like moths  
you somewhere out there  
telling the truth

Come back soon with your  
crowbar hands  
that could fashion sheepskin  
and wood  
and hold trees down like buffalo

I'll open the screen door for you  
on Saturday  
or maybe Sunday  
in our second chance moonlight  
maybe holding out for  
a second chance spring

They ask me where I'm from  
Gaze upon me expectantly  
Waiting for me to blurt  
Some sort of blurb

When I think of home  
I feel so much  
I close my eyes  
When I open them I'm lost

I think about the lemon tree  
Out back, older than me  
Its roots hide decomposed treasures  
Its fruits juicy with all our whispered secrets

I remember the garden's smell after the first rain  
That one tiny patch where nothing grows  
Smack in the middle of the flower beds  
Because that's the dog's business area

Kept various pets  
Among them an earthworm  
Cried when it died in the rain  
Rescued birds and a frog

How we annoyed the neighbours  
By smashing balls and shuttles over to their place  
Losing them in the process  
Breaking some windows, blaming it on a storm

I trace the cracks along the walls  
Open the gates and hear them creak  
My room just as I remember it  
Not pink, but lavender

# Home

- Udita Mukherjee

I trace the cracks along the walls  
Open the gates and hear them creak  
My room just as I remember it  
Not pink, but lavender

Out in the passage  
The leaves float down  
Along with an occasional white fluff  
That I blow on, to keep from touching the ground

Tiny yellow and cream butterflies  
Peach petals with thorns  
The tap we once unhinged with a football  
The hose for our water fights

So many cuts and wounds  
Still fresh in my memory  
Whenever I had a bruised heart  
This place healed it

The dining table, a little imbalanced  
The couch in the living room  
The shelves lined with books  
So comfortable, so familiar

I miss my home  
When I open my eyes  
I'm not there amidst the greens  
I don't recognize where I am

I look at the sparrows  
I used to talk to  
Ask them to take me back  
They chirp like they understand

# Home

- Udita Mukherjee

Light shows in the west, but haggard now,  
dragged for hours through hives of rain-stoked earth,  
feelers through my window and forgets  
its species.  
Spring went extinct in the night again

and it's been raining so softly you might never  
have heard it. I'll tell you  
about the field up the road which I'll take you to someday  
where the satellites shift blissfully their broken spines.  
Creaking they bow, let the sun's sheaves  
swab them.  
I suppose you would tell me how they fell, which  
planets wept then, whose poem could preclude it?  
Suppose I don't know  
why I ask anymore. Ah!

Yesterday, I sat down and scrapped my calendar  
to the bone.  
Scrawl I saw husked between my knees. Graphite  
undated till the sockets gloamed, clockless and big enough  
to bathe in.  
God, I could've sworn I'd never breathe again,  
but now the walls strain softly  
our miracles.

That window would open instead of eyes.  
When heat does come, it's  
incalculable.  
Don't care what anyone thinks, least of all myself.  
"Sometimes" fattens the seconds on young  
of their own.

Hope the sky will have fled before I'm Home.  
Hope, for everyone's sake, the birds never get old.  
Far off, a cuckoo's cry runs barefoot  
across the rooftops,  
almost noble,

and the fine-spun architecture of our day together  
is trembling on the burnt-up air.

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Hope, for everyone's sake, the birds never get old.  
Far off, a cuckoo's cry runs barefoot  
across the rooftops,  
almost noble,

and the fine-spun architecture of our day together  
is trembling on the burnt-up air.



# Soon

- Leo Kang



I watched, with longing eyes, as a book held your attention. Why would you pick that rusty old thing up, anyway? It was possibly the ugliest-looking book I had ever seen—let alone read. The story was awful, the protagonist was hideous, and the dialogue made me want to puke. How did it even get published?

But you were still gazing at it, as if you were looking for something good in it. I couldn't stand it. "Look at me!" I finally shouted. But, of course, you couldn't hear me. Books and humans didn't share the same language.

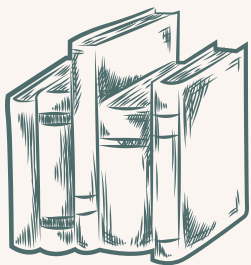
Why didn't you pick me up? Did you even notice me? I couldn't see how you wouldn't. I was the hero of a glorious adventure, a tale so exciting that I would have you on the edge of your seat. I was likable, charming, courteous—nothing like the book you held in your hands now.

"Look at me."

And then, you shook your head at that dreadful book and placed it back on the shelf. "I'm not really into this," you said.

My heart rose. Yes!

Frowning, you searched around for another book. I was practically bouncing up and down around the pages as you neared me, hoping that you would find me, pick me up—



## *Bookworm Love*

– *Fairley Lloyd*

My heart fluttered as you finally stepped towards me. Your eyes immediately fell to the summary of the story, causing your eyes to light up in excitement. Yes, yes, yes! I could feel your hands instantly flipping towards the pages, scanning through each passage, your hands moving faster and faster as you kept reading...

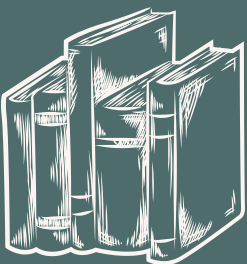
The book suddenly shut closed.

My body went numb. What happened? *Did I do something? Have I lost your interest?* Maybe, somehow, you had sensed me talking jealously about the other book and were turned off by my attitude. *I'm not always like this. I'm sorry—*

And then, something happened. You smiled, a wide grin spreading across your whole face, your beautiful teeth shining with happiness. “Oh, I am definitely getting this,” you said.

I couldn't help but smile back as you brought me to the register. The process of being purchased seemed to take forever, but I was willing to wait; just being with you, sharing your own pleasure, was enough for me. Even after you bought me and began making your way home, you could never keep your eyes off of me for too long.

The day you bought me was the best of my life. But the moment you read me, the moment you said “I love you” was the happiest moment of my life. Because even though you thought I only existed in a fictional world, you said you wanted me to be real, and that, if I truly existed in your world, you would love me.





# The Balance of the lovers

- Anacia Sessoms -

THE LOVERS





**Fun Zone Frenzy**  
- *Anacia Sessoms*

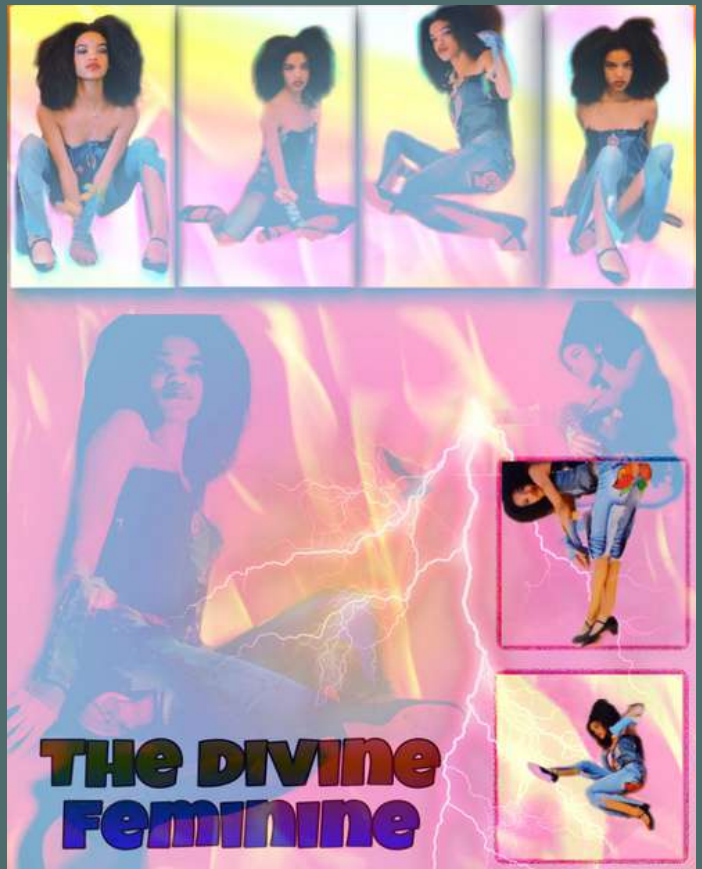


**Spring Equinox**  
- *Anacia Sessoms*



# The Duality of Gemini

- Anacia Sessoms



# The Divine Feminine

- Anacia Sessoms



# Cyclical

*Chris Mardiroussian*

The phone rings  
And rings  
And rings  
Asks  
Where  
I've been.

“Well, I’m long gone,” I said.

“What do you mean?”

“You’ll see.”

They’ll come home to  
A vacuumed carpet,  
rinsed-washed dishes,  
six-pack of scattered  
aluminum cans,  
folded bedsheets,  
only to...  
...relapse back  
to you,  
and  
*talk it over*  
in bed,  
with a  
sloppy,  
saucy,  
schmuck.

*(published in Perfumed Pages Magazine)*

# What's happening to me?

- Chris Mardiroussian

I used to be so spry,  
young, energetic like  
a lithium cocaine battery,  
now, I'm just a grumpy,  
cantankerous,  
lethargic dried-up prune  
that falls asleep at 10 o'clock,  
pees sitting down,  
and  
only feasts  
after six.

(as published in *Star Gazette Magazine*)

# Don't sugar-coat it

- Chris Mardiroussian

She invited me  
in between those  
lettuce wrap cracks  
to  
RUB  
RUB  
RUB  
until full detonation.

"Slip it in," she whimpered.  
"Don't be shy."

I heard her remark,  
And slipped it in as if she

were a coin slot.

THRUST.  
THRUST.  
THRUST.

One good fuck, I thought.  
And then we can leave,  
forget we ever met,  
and make way for  
others to slip in extras  
and probably  
LOVE  
them,  
two.

# Racing Raindrops

- *Anamika Satheesh*

Oh, how we all reminisce about the simpler times of our childhood! The older we get, the more nostalgic we tend to get. As the turbulence in life wraps around us, it is not surprising if our wishes lean towards the direction of the past. The memories of being confused over how we fell asleep on the couch and woke up the next morning on the bed seem so far away now. Lesser responsibilities and stress do sound like something we would want to have, don't they? Well yes, they certainly do, but personally, I can no longer find solace in reminiscing the memories of the past.

I remember happier times when I had fewer assignments to do and more relaxed deadlines to meet. I remember times when I did not have to worry about having to give back to my family and society, but rather enjoy what was being provided to be whilst protected from the heinousness side of life. I remember times when I saw the world through rose-

tinted glasses instead of the different shades of grey I see today - some tolerable and some absolutely terrifying. I remember times when people looked at me and smiled as they saw innocence in its physical form instead of the perceived faces of disdain I see surrounding me. I remembered times when people helped me up and kissed the pain away in contrast to the indifference I am met with now if I fall down.

Indeed, those were simpler times, for ignorance was bliss. There was not a care in the world. I'd sit by the window on a rainy day, with hot milk in a special cup with a teddy bear's face printed on it, wondering where the water is coming from while simultaneously cheering for the raindrop on the left. In the race between the two raindrops, I favoured the one on the left for the simple reason that it had come to the window first, and hence deserved to arrive at the finishing line at the windowsill before the

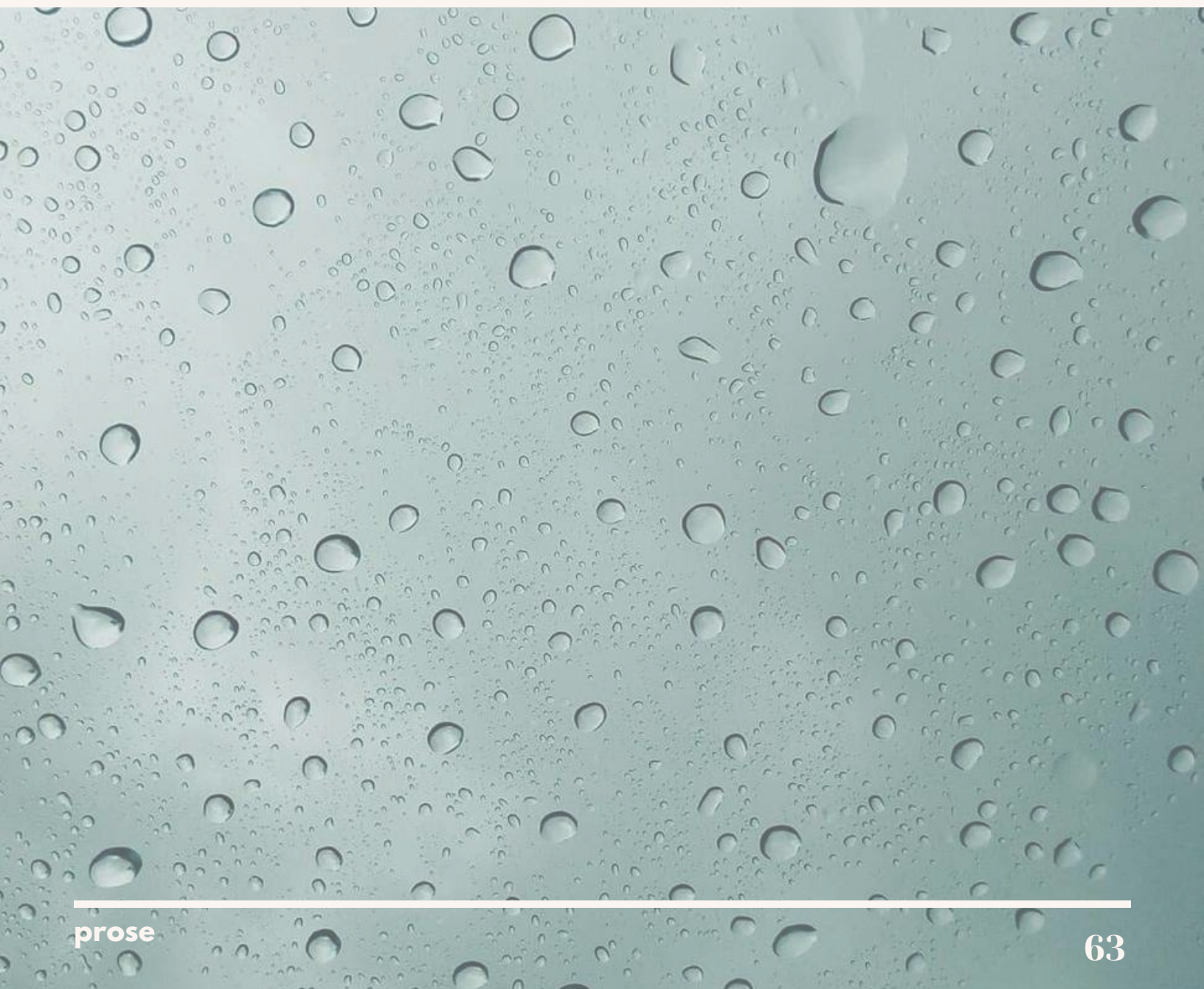
raindrop on the right. Imagine my frustration when the raindrop on the right overtook my favourite, and little did I know that I'd be experiencing similar ones in the future.

The sole reason for drinking the milk I had in my hands was the belief that it would help me grow. Being a grown-up seemed much better. There were so many things that people around me refused to let me do, but I had definitely seen my elder cousins do it with impunity. When I asked, I was told that I would have to drink my milk, learn to read bigger words, know how to count without using my fingers, and grow bigger to be able to do those. So I wanted to grow up as fast as I could.

Now, I am surrounded by reasons to go back to those times when thunder made me cry. However, I do not, even for a split second, wish to go back. Over the years, I have amassed in insurmountable amount of knowledge, and this has

inevitably granted me the power to do many things - just as my younger version had predicted. Along with major responsibilities, my little self was deficient in this weapon. Now that I have acquired all this knowledge and will continue to do so till the end of my time, I would never want to go back to that state of oblivion that I existed in.

In the present, I have the power to bring change. I see raindrops racing to get to the windowsill and I am often one of those raindrops. However, I am equipped with the momentum to get there first and if I use it wisely, I could, perhaps, attempt to establish an egalitarian world that the little version of me hoped to see. I could make the hopes and dreams of other little girls come true. I can move forward without having to worry about when I'd be able to do things but rather plan on how I should do these things to make sure others can live the life that I hoped to be a part of forever. I refuse to run away back to the past when I can continue to move forward, armed with the weaponry of knowledge and fueled by the passion of our collective hopes and dreams.



# SALON ROSE

- *Paulina Freedman*

Faded valentines and  
soft hibiscus Hummingbirds  
whispering across the  
sky The squish of sand  
between the toes Fiery sun  
sinking into the ocean  
Brick houses with painted  
shutters Lollipops and  
cotton candy Plush cashmere  
and fuzzy socks Blossoms  
on a child's bedroom  
wall The fabric of a  
prom dress Sugared roses  
on a birthday cake  
Stop signs faded with  
age Smooth layers  
of lipstick Breast cancer ribbons  
on car bumpers Pillow-soft  
grade school erasers Champagne  
bubbles Plump fruits  
in summer time The bloom on  
an embarrassed cheek





# *A Taste of Summer*

- Amanda-Jane Bayliss

Stirring the reflection of my flavored brew

Scented berries filling the air

A juicy aroma everywhere

A drop of dew hanging

Off my silver spoon.

Arraying my bloom

In the summer sun

Reflection of the

Floridian zest

Edging on nature's fun.

A thin slither of butter

In tune with a colorful flutter

I wish I was that lady

Her coat, a colour of delight.

Wings of love

wherever she flies

A significant moment

For observing eyes.

At dawn, the chorus commenced

Friday flock

Bird so black

Morning thrush

Seducing choir

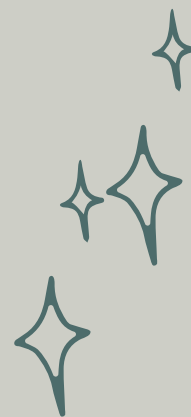
Sound to my ears.

Sweet delights to

Start the day

Not a cloud in the sky

I hope it stays this way.



## *Starlight*

- Amanda-Jane Bayliss

As I dance upon the lake

The water crystal clear.

I dance under the starlight

Tapping my toes.

To the beat of the

Buzz, of the bee,

I drift to the rhythm

As I fall in love.

For the world

To see.

# Absence of the Breeze

- Amanda-Jane Bayliss

I miss the breeze  
The whisper of our love  
Together we planted seeds  
In our vibrant garden  
Of love.

Everyday we smiled as  
The sun shined through  
As it shone down  
On our golden petals.

We sang along to  
The sweet melodies  
Of the mockingbird  
That praised our favourite song.

Now these days have gone  
I miss you  
With every heartbeat  
With every flutter.

You have been taken away  
From the tree  
Like an apple  
That landed  
With a thud.

My heart injected  
With the  
Everlasting  
Sting of a nettle.

You are out of reach  
You are out of touch  
The tears that I cry  
Flow with the rain.

A roll of thunder  
Echoes in my heart  
My thirst for your touch  
Is blinded  
By a flash of light.

My cheery branches long  
For the blossom to show  
For the love to grow  
For this curse to go.

And above all for the breeze to blow.





# My Garden

- *Doug Van Hooser*

Why am I always dancing in the Garden of Craving?

My lust of wanton want occupies my mind's hands.

Massages every thought.

Ambition a dog muddled by differing scents.

Each day has to be apple pie.

Who wants to sweeten rhubarb?

Taste the hangover of bitterness? Memories linger  
that I never resolve but repeat in my conscious  
as an untranslated mantra.

I covet the smell of lilies between breasts,  
the downy damp in my fingers:  
the lost and found of desire.

Time a spare bedroom I awake in and wonder  
how long must the dream be?

When will sleep resolve my mistakes?

Errors, the snap of a whip, do not urge me on or make me perform  
for my audience of one. My insight a buried bone.

I dig holes, find nothing,  
refill the holes and tamp down the clotted dirt.

## Do not believe

- *Doug Van Hooser*

what I am about to tell you.

The stories are not fiction.

But they have baked too long.

Ripeness cannot be preserved.

I recognize my father's shadow in the mirror.

When the light is right I hear my mother.

My siblings are artifacts

catalogued in a museum basement.

Friends are snowballs that melt or shatter.

But a few are tennis balls,

chewed and coated with saliva.

One must retrieve again and again.

We may never hold hands but we dance.

Our music shares the starlight,

bright spots in the dark.

Now color drains from leaves

that gather on the ground.

The withered promise we no longer believe.

We abandon each other

like winter leaves autumn.

A scarecrow left in the harvested field.

**BEAUTY IN THE SMOKE**



**Diedre Darby**



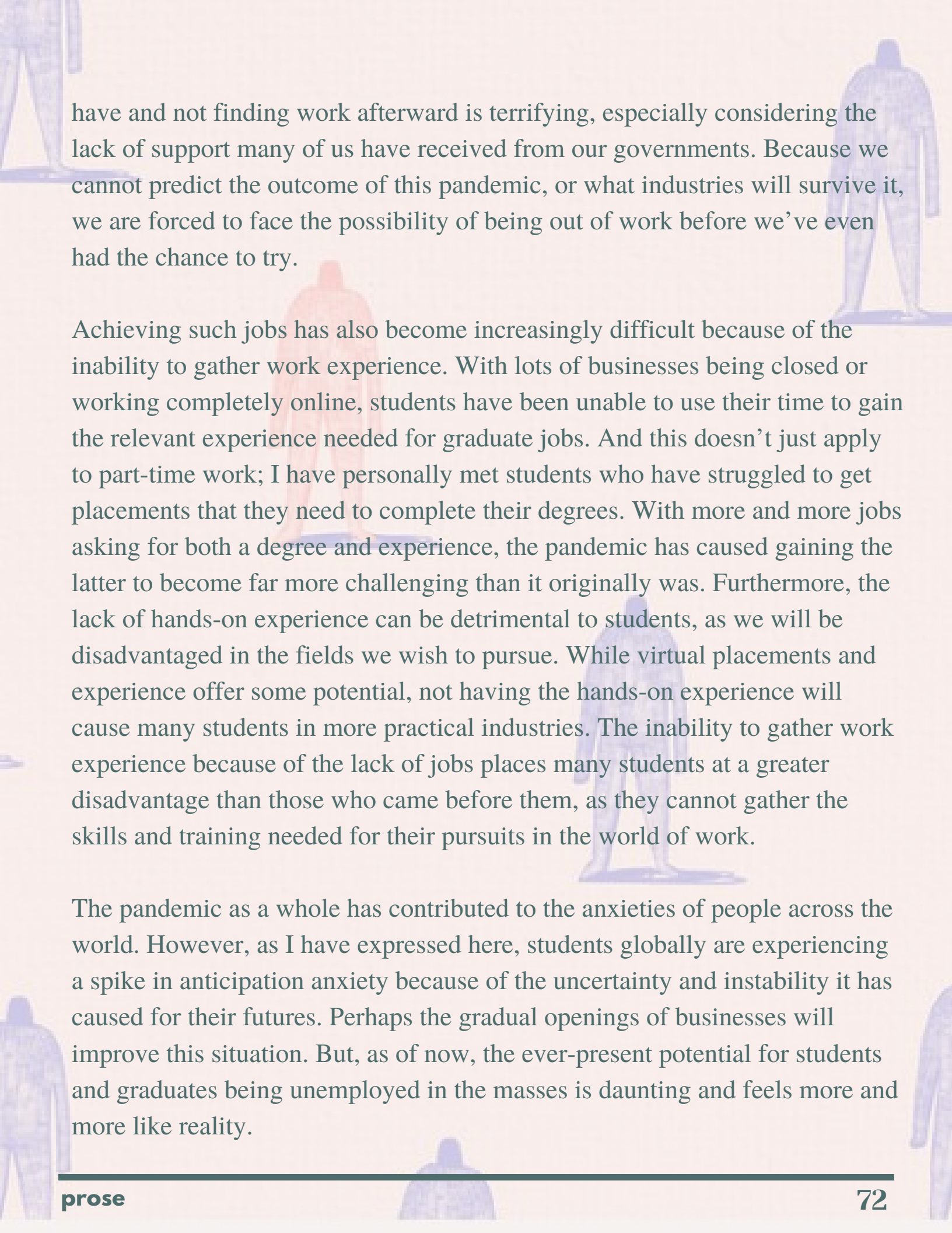
*John's Toy*  
- Diedre Darby

# Anticipation Anxiety: What Students Fear After the Pandemic

- Emily Bryant

The pandemic has encouraged instability across all aspects of our lives. Such instability, I have found, often leads to people becoming anxious about most things. As a university student, the pandemic has made me more acquainted with a particular type of anxiety: anticipation anxiety. According to Anxiety UK, anticipation anxiety is “*where a person experiences increased levels of anxiety by thinking about an event or situation in the future*”. This type of anxiety is often grouped in with other anxiety-related conditions (like generalized anxiety) rather than being a specific anxiety disorder.

Now, usually, such anxiety occurs when people are worried about important events, like interviews or their first day at work. However, I and many of my fellow university students have experienced anticipation anxiety in a slightly different way: over our futures. Countless businesses across the world have struggled during the pandemic, leaving the job market hanging in the balance. The looming end of lockdown forces us to confront the depleting world of work that faces us when we finish our studies. Pursuing the jobs we want, the jobs we have studied for have become more and more competitive because of their lack of availability. This also applies to part-time work, as students across the world have struggled financially because they cannot get the jobs they need to support themselves as they study. Personally, not knowing if I will be able to get any job in the future, and struggling to get any part-time work at all, because of the uncertainty caused by the pandemic has caused much anxiety and stress in my life. The possibility of putting in the work we



have and not finding work afterward is terrifying, especially considering the lack of support many of us have received from our governments. Because we cannot predict the outcome of this pandemic, or what industries will survive it, we are forced to face the possibility of being out of work before we've even had the chance to try.

Achieving such jobs has also become increasingly difficult because of the inability to gather work experience. With lots of businesses being closed or working completely online, students have been unable to use their time to gain the relevant experience needed for graduate jobs. And this doesn't just apply to part-time work; I have personally met students who have struggled to get placements that they need to complete their degrees. With more and more jobs asking for both a degree and experience, the pandemic has caused gaining the latter to become far more challenging than it originally was. Furthermore, the lack of hands-on experience can be detrimental to students, as we will be disadvantaged in the fields we wish to pursue. While virtual placements and experience offer some potential, not having the hands-on experience will cause many students in more practical industries. The inability to gather work experience because of the lack of jobs places many students at a greater disadvantage than those who came before them, as they cannot gather the skills and training needed for their pursuits in the world of work.

The pandemic as a whole has contributed to the anxieties of people across the world. However, as I have expressed here, students globally are experiencing a spike in anticipation anxiety because of the uncertainty and instability it has caused for their futures. Perhaps the gradual openings of businesses will improve this situation. But, as of now, the ever-present potential for students and graduates being unemployed in the masses is daunting and feels more and more like reality.



# Girl Murdered

- John Grey

The picture smiles at me from the newspaper.  
She's seventeen, unaware she won't live to be eighteen.  
And black and white but that hair is blonde, I know it,  
and those eyes are incandescent blue.  
In that hopeful pretty face, I sense the power to influence,  
to move, to make a statement, to leave a mark,  
to transcend even, to take the world in her soft bare hands  
and create something as beautiful as she.  
I ignore the details of the crime.  
Blood stains on white blouse...that's another poem.  
Mum and dad boarded up behind tears...  
that's how parents normally operate.  
And then there's the picture of the killer  
being led from his house in handcuffs.  
I need go no further.  
The quotes are sure to be the usual neighborhood clichés.  
"Quiet boy." "Kept to himself." "No friends."  
"It's the mother I feel sorry for."  
They could just as easily be describing  
Kafka or Dostoevsky or Van Gogh.  
But in that blank, unshaven face, I sense  
the emptiness, the callousness, the willingness to destroy  
whatever it is he will never be.  
The world's much too big for him to take in his hands  
so he tries out a little remolding, reshaping,  
on the throat of the girl down the street.  
That's how I leave it.  
All kinds of people can coexist in this world.  
But these two pictures? Not likely.



# Summer Afternoon Sit-in

- John Grey

Joe and Mac  
understand  
summer afternoons

tenement steps  
steamy weather flattening  
breath

day closes in  
with the slap  
of sneakers on sidewalks

the gruff mechanics  
of passing cars

thoughts constrict  
to one unmistakable dimension

no words  
just sweat

good friends  
out of it

and yet  
someplace

\* \* \*

## An eight hour drive

- John Grey

The night was an automobile -

longer than a mini  
but nowhere near  
a stretch limo

and not lording over her  
like a BMW  
or flashing its fanciness  
as a Porsche would do.

It was a compact,  
but with plenty of room  
in the back  
for baggage.

It wasn't a manual  
thank God.  
She's never been  
that coordinated.

It was automatic,  
a comfortable drive,  
with excellent mileage,  
and just enough acceleration.

Now, it's morning.  
The passenger's in bed.  
She's making coffee,  
slow, deliberate,  
but her hands still on the wheel.



# Male, Female

– John Grey

Male cicadas are singing,  
tymbals flexing,  
chambers resonating,  
wings rubbed on ridges,  
in a field of thorny beach rose.  
Amidst this cacophony,  
the females are silent.

Meanwhile, I parody  
your phone conversation  
with a girlfriend,  
do chattering mouths  
with my hands  
while you look about  
for the nearest cushion  
to toss at me.

The male insect's song  
might mean loneliness  
or it could be a brag.  
At least, that's what  
I know of my own sex  
and the sounds we make.  
But the females have me puzzled.  
Don't they ever just get  
with others of their kind  
and natter?

I'm growing impatient.  
That call you're on  
has been at least an hour  
and shows no sign of stopping.  
And it's getting darker.  
The cicadas will shut down soon.  
The balance will go out of this world.



# PATIENCE

- Oormila Vijaykrishnan Prahlad



*"During the lockdown last year, I propagated ivy from cuttings. It was therapeutic to watch the roots slowly emerge, and the cutting become a full fledged plant. I later spread the ivy along my studio walls. I am rooting some ivy again this year. "Patience" documents this process."*

# THE HOME

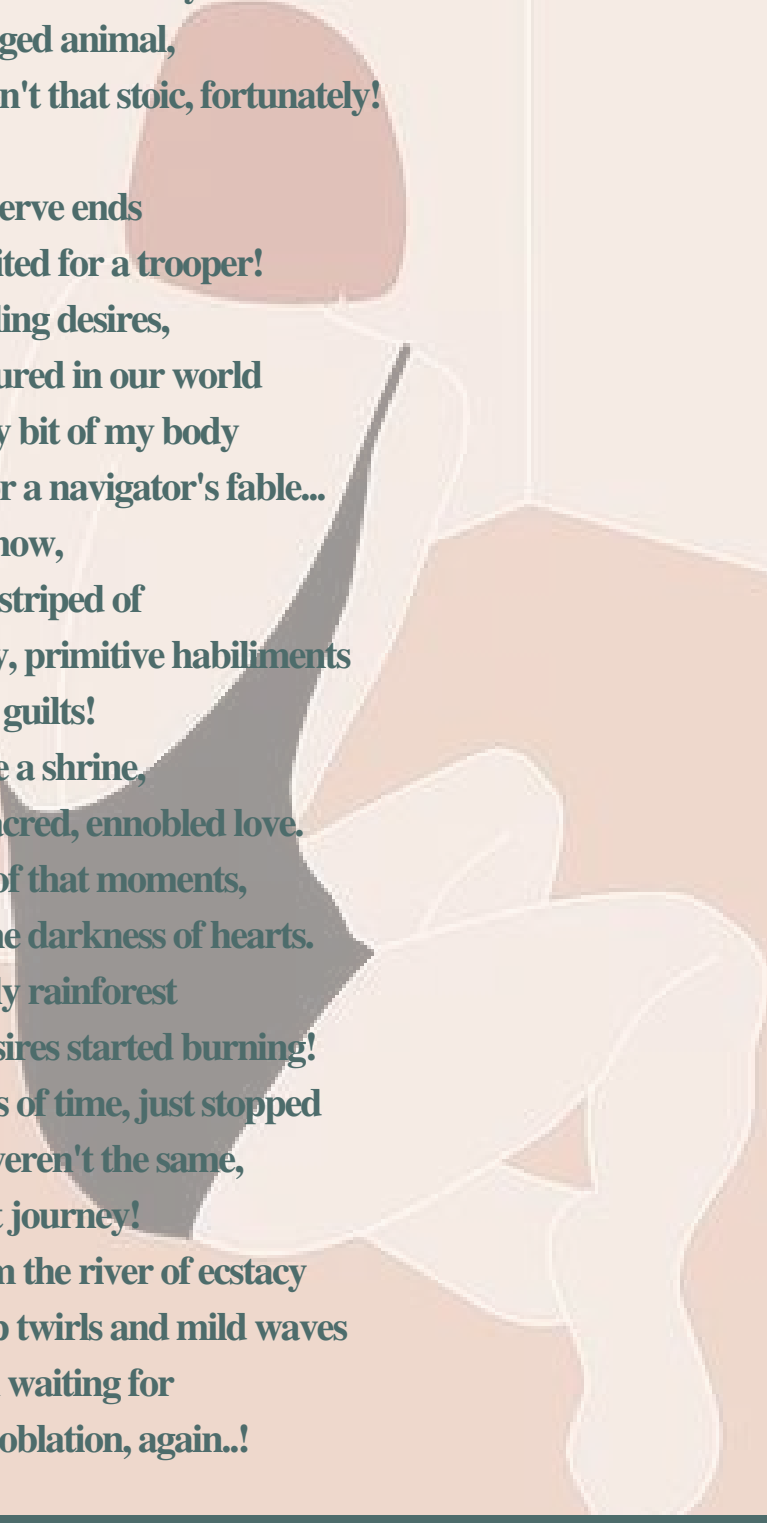
- *Dr. Manjusha Hari*

Me, a bare whirlwind  
aimless, yet stubborn!  
I never touch  
the shoreline or the sand hills.  
I never taste  
the wordings of pleasure.  
I thawed, I trampled,  
I shattered, and I divided...  
The tough silence  
seeding in the womb of my thoughts;  
Still the last drops of laugh remains  
in the name of your hoar love!  
We drift apart  
like a scattered metaphor..  
and the time hanging  
on my untied hair as the bud sentience!  
Gift me fetters  
and let me break it.  
Let me reborn  
in the painless frigidity, with you.  
But the waves of air encaging me,  
in the illusion of lost souls!  
I'm a distressing whirlwind  
which you never expected.  
Not the land, not the sea,  
not the hills or not the hearts  
I belong to the trench of hell!



# The forgotten

- Dr. Manjusha Hari



The fossils of your lust,  
still here,  
in the rock walls of my heart.  
Like a caged animal,  
you weren't that stoic, fortunately!  
I set fire,  
in your nerve ends  
and I waited for a trooper!  
The twirling desires,  
down poured in our world  
and every bit of my body  
waited for a navigator's fable...  
I don't know,  
how you striped of  
my heavy, primitive habiliments  
and false guilts!  
You were a shrine,  
for my sacred, ennobled love.  
Embers of that moments,  
ignited the darkness of hearts.  
The lonely rainforest  
of my desires started burning!  
The beats of time, just stopped  
and we weren't the same,  
after that journey!  
Now, i am the river of ecstasy  
with deep twirls and mild waves  
Yes, i am waiting for  
your self oblation, again..!

The fossils of your lust,  
still here,  
in the rock walls of my heart.  
Like a caged animal,  
you weren't that stoic, fortunately!  
I set fire,  
in your nerve ends  
and I waited for a trooper!

# A Literary Interpretation Class

– *Praniti Gulyani*

he begins the class –  
with a poem on *hate*  
and asks us to “underline the similes”  
pointing out the places where  
hate has been called as *an intriguing labyrinth*  
*a maze* and a *flickering shadow*  
of the *human heart* that extends  
*beyond biology, tenderly receding*  
*into the faintly-lit caverns*  
*of the metaphor*

he then instructs us, to  
take out our green highlighter  
and “mark the alliteration”  
somehow, his fists clench and  
he whips the pages with his ruler  
especially the places where the poet has  
heartlessly spoken about  
“*mortified motherhood*”, “*petrified paternity*”  
and as he hits the pages  
again, and again and again, these pages  
seem to whisper, wail, whimper

moving on, he tells us –  
to encircle the repetition, and asks us  
about the impact it has  
on the tone and the rhythm and when  
we raise our brows at these jargons  
he tells us, he to look  
at the poem in general

and, with dry flakes  
of thick, grey chalk, he asks us  
to capture, in ovals –  
the fluttering bits of stanza  
that reach out, into the poem  
with long, scaly fingers  
and leave their fingerprints  
just about everywhere

and, with quivering movements  
I encase the *moaning* and the *screaming*  
the *sobbing* and the *weeping*–

with my bland, salty-grey pencil  
I struggle to cage  
the vaporizing, shape-shifting  
*unuttered cries*  
of a newborn, that linger around  
his lips that have long discarded  
their dewy-moistness  
and turned a subtle blue

finally, he asks us –  
to pick up our crayon which must be  
deeper than the deepest scarlet  
so much so, that it must hurt  
to look at it

and with that, he insists  
that we must color in all the words that  
hold personification upon their shoulders

the places where  
the wounds embrace each other  
with little, purple arms  
and quest for a mother  
amidst this landmass of skin



he asks us, to color so hard  
that our color-stubs form  
holes in the poem

and with our simply-rounded color stubs  
charged with this sense of ferociousness

while we tear through *blood-stains that call out*  
and *bullets that laugh and giggles*

and as our crayon tarries a while  
to straighten itself

it storms through the battlefield  
of verse and stanza, all set to conquer

*guns that smirk*





# When a soul dances in the fire

- *Edward Lee*



to say the very least –  
I have a heavy head, and  
with the stone that held Medusa, I will  
carve a six-shelved  
headache-holder and sprinkle  
some starlight onto it, perhaps

I will pick my headaches off  
my teenage-girl eyebrows, and place them  
in the headache-holder

the meticulous bits of mother  
in my heart, make me  
arrange my headaches according to  
shape and size and perhaps smell

I put the bigger ones  
at the back, those coated  
with perspiring layers of patience, picked  
from that place between the eyebrows  
and scraped off pillow-covers  
with broken, yellowing nails  
and then, I move –  
onto the uncertain ones  
those, that linger  
between big and small

they squirm between  
my fingers, as I scatter them around  
the headache-holder putting some  
at the back, some in the front  
as they emit  
short, sharp jerks  
of bittersweet odor, picked  
from the crest of my forehead  
with quivering, unsure fingers

## A Headache Holder

- *Praniti Gulyani*



finally, I advance towards –  
the smallest ones, that slither  
like slippery, angry eels

and, as I struggle to tighten  
my fists around them and place them  
in the front, they slash my palms  
with agonized, metallic tails

for they must be tucked into  
frock-pockets, and threaded into  
the underlying silences of a moment

they must not be put  
on outstretched palms that face  
even the sky

for they are pungent with football fields  
and upturned socks and shoe polish  
and ironed shirts and cigarette ends  
and moldy sandwiches and shadows;  
shadows that are lifted and slammed  
against the frosty tiles of bedroom walls

shadows that are slammed and pushed  
and slapped and stamped  
and hurled

soundlessly

they are vibrant with the shades  
of every thread, that embroiders  
the extrinsic layers  
of this tapestry called silence

carefully  
concealing  
what lies

inside



Your eyes turned soft when you started complaining that night. The twinkle in them got sharper.

Your cheeks sulking, your lips never touching each other. You continued to mumble words out of your mouth, one after the other. Your head resting at my chest, stayed still. You were close to my heart, and it reveled in peace. It was beating at a pace, dedicated to absorbing the warmth that your head brought to its vicinity.

I smiled at how you chose to suspend your words of kiddish anger and put them on hold; only to pull yourself closer to my chest and wrap both your hands around mine. Just to listen to my heart tuning in to the symphony of music, that it learned from the love of your heart.

Your hair felt soothing like the soft grass on a fresh, sown land of an early spring morning. Cold yet warm! It smelt of berries and fruits. I chuckled as I took my rounds, burying my face into them.

My fingers stroking your hair, and the flaps of your eyes falling. You still are angry. "We could have stayed here longer. Do you think we will witness something as great as those waves ever again in our lives? The sea, the waves, the illuminating lanes. We lie together on the sand; our differences left the minds and almost sank into it, percolating out of us." I quietly listened to you.

"You looked beautiful today. I had never seen you smile like that."

Your eyes struggled, trying to peek from beneath the droopy eyelids. Nevertheless, your words. "We can adjust the tickets. I believe if we request them, they can possibly do

**We  
could  
have  
stayed  
longer**

*- Arpita Singh*



something about it. I don't want to leave now. I am afraid if we go back, the reconciliation that we have battled to achieve may lose its strength. We are together. But the cord connecting our hearts is delicate. Why? It has suffered so much in the past. Blame me. I am an idiot. But I don't want to go back this soon. I am not ready to leave yet."

I knew one thing for sure, I was an idiot too. He wasn't the only one making mistakes. I touched his lips, patted the bridge of his nose. He had fallen asleep. I observed the movement of his chest, heaving in a rhythm I seemed to find adorable.

Lost in his words, because they did crack a meaning. My head bent lower, and kissing his forehead, settled on it. I was still thinking about how things would unfold, once we got back to normal, where we at times attain the most rigid form of ourselves. While at the other, the most vulnerable. Dangling between love and the fight to protect our love.



# Unknown

- *Ramsha Rizvi*

On a bench in an unknown city,  
The smell of copper and tree.  
A man sat beside me and spoke in a voice so loving, so serene,  
He said to let go of my worrying, and that I'll have everything.

And in that moment time stood still,  
He and I sat in peace.  
A dove perched on my windowsill,  
And shook me from my dream.

And now I've been thinking things over,  
About life, death, who I want to be.  
And I know that in the end, no matter what  
I'll have been happy just to be me.

And I hope I see him again someday,  
To ask him how he's been,  
And I hope we'll meet in that same park  
On that same bench where we sat in my dream.



# Be enduring

- *Jimena Ramos Yengle*

Your footprints are marking a story  
That does not collapse before the wind  
You are neither logical nor sane  
Precipitated, and I lose myself

Silent door, you don't knock  
Try to uncover the old glories  
Without poisoning the present  
You are already quite absent

You tend to infinity  
Incredulous and suspicious written  
They run claps of a song  
Crippling bandolier in my heart

And if you feel that I am inspired by more  
Your relic, it's lustral delirium  
Do not think to neglect mental alienation  
You meditate rudely on the threshold



# CHILDHOOD RUNAWAY

A series of self-exploration

- *Maisie Cu*



*I look back into my childhood to find a part of me that I am yearning for.*

*I don't know when nostalgia started. But it seems to blossom within me everyday.*

*"A series of self exploration through pictorial images. It is a transitional progress between childhood and adulthood. It is a finding of the self. It is a return to home. Or all at once."*



*Nostalgia is a weird concept.  
Sometimes I find myself in this  
whirlwind of life with sadness  
overcrowding me.*

*People say when adult life gets  
hectic, the needs to return to  
one's origin of existence deem  
essential. But what do I know  
about my origins?*

*As I grew older, the things I used  
to know also grew older.*



*I want to return back to the age  
where the birthday cake was  
bigger than my size.*

*The unbearable burden and  
responsibility of adult life seems  
so much that only a return for  
childhood can relieve my heart.*

*I miss my mother meals.*

*I miss my dad waking me and my  
brother up every morning.*

*I miss the quotidien of growing  
up.*

*I miss the saturation of banality  
that becomes meaningful rituals.*

*And that's a lot of missing...*



*Take me home,*

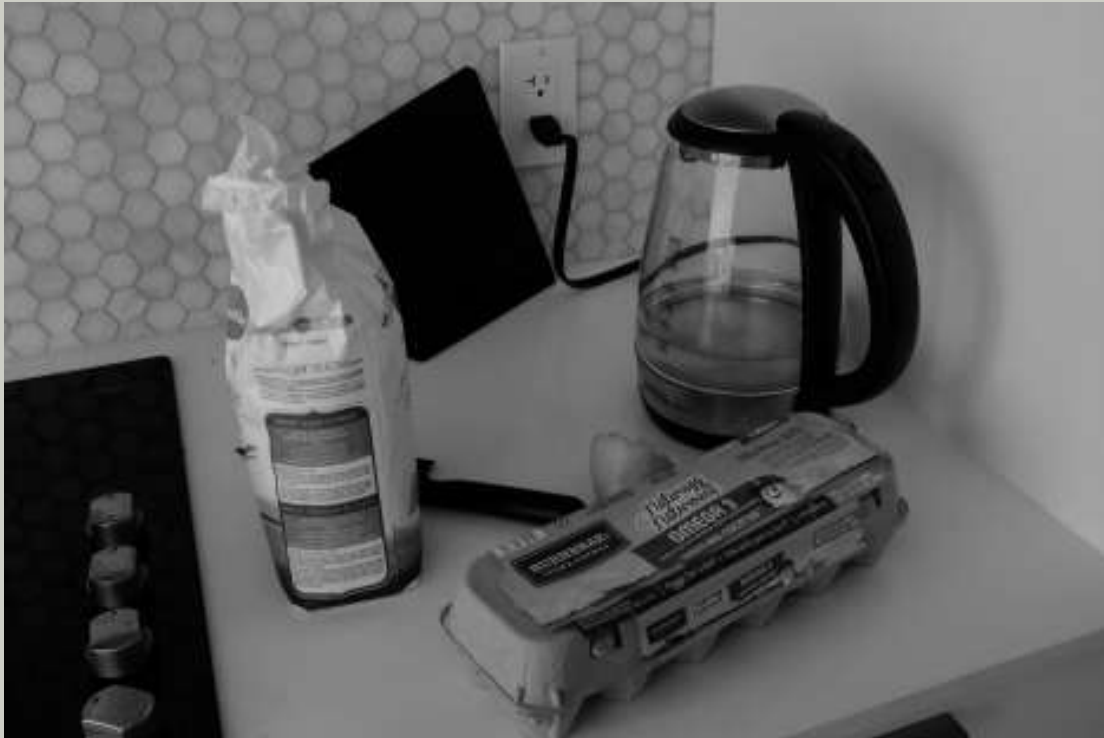
*I'm ready to come back*

*Take me home,*

*I'm ready to reclaim a lost  
piece of me.*

# A banal moment

- Lee Tran & Maisie Cu



The sunshine struck half of her face, illuminating a reflection of a stained glass window in the form of a dead plant. She pushed the bottom of her feet to feel the gravity of her inclined body upon the cool wooden floor. She approached the plant while dragging herself through a pile of dirty clothes on the floor that had been accumulated for the past two weeks, which was jumbled with used notepads and past exam papers.

“I should probably throw them out now,” she thought as the leaves crumbled down when her hands attempted to touch them. A blank space shattered her brain like a flash of a camera that overexposed her thoughts with light for two second, making it completely frozen. “Nah. Maybe later.”

Her stomach rumbled. She was aware of her own starvation as she opened the door and headed down to the kitchen.

The door of the fridge was a different world for her as she looked through it. A pungent smell entered her nostrils and straight to her lungs as she coughed.

Holy moly, I hate my life! What idiot spilled a jar of pickles and not cleaned it up. That's disgusting!" she cried out as she observed the water dripping down on the white enamel kitchen tile which created a brownish yellow splash that resembled human secretion. "Forget about it. I'll order pizza".

She hated that she had to share the fridge with other people. She hated that she had roommates. But she also hated it when there were bugs and she had to deal with them herself. But let's be fair if there was a bug, nobody would kill it anyway because whose property did the bug belong to? A common space. And as such, nobody cared enough to kill it. So the little bug would just be chilling and living rent free as she struggled in disgust.

"It can't get worse from here".

The reminder of comfort for home overshadowed her body, as she shrugged away the flashback of her mother's foods. It was funny how she never thought of learning how to cook at home as her mother always prepared meals without a single complaint. Growing up from the remnant of an overprotective Asian family, she found herself struggling to assimilate her identity in a foreign country. She wanted her mother to be there for her and at the same time felt the anguish of anxiety from knowing that she was unprepared and was left alone for her university life. She didn't even own a hair brush for heaven's sake. She felt attacked and victimized by almost anything. She wanted to cry over everything. Isn't it interesting that a family could give almost no affection but too much protection? She wanted her mom but didn't want her mom. She was confused. She didn't know how to stand up for herself as her parents stood up for her against almost all animosity.

Then again, she had to realize, it was not her parents' fault that she was confused. It was a sense of self that is in need of cultivation. It was the fact that she was unable to speak up. The fact that she couldn't get away from the attachment of objects and still wanted to hold on to the dead plant lying around somewhere in her room. Such attachment was not of the objects in themselves but rather of something missing inside her. As she thought of the restriction of physical movement by the pile of dirty laundry on the ground, it filed a condemnation toward the return of responsibility. It was her that needed to take control.



She approached a roll of paper towel, ripped a sheet and began to clean up the spilled pickle at the bottom of the fridge. Sure, it wasn't her mess, but it appeared within the space of her physical being. Thus, such struggle would indeed add on to her nihilistic tendency and useless sufferings. Did she need to find some meaning to function? What meanings? A relief of anxiety for the people around her? Even for those that she didn't like? It couldn't be just that, it was a return for a sense of consolation for herself against useless sufferings.

She was heading upstairs back to her room. Her steps seemed lighter on the stairs. She noticed a window at the end of the hallway. Through it, she could see the whole sky emerging into view.

It was a crystal-clear day. She enjoyed it when there wasn't a speck of clouds and she could truly grasp the vast emptiness of the sky.

She turned on the light as she entered her room. It was rather an interesting gesture as the sun was at peak noon. How much light would one need to see in all hidden corners of the room? All the lights if that's what it would take. Her eyes glanced from the vicissitudes of the dead plant by the window, to the dirty pile of laundry at the bottom of the floor and to the empty box of chocolate on her table. She took out a garbage bag from under her bed and started throwing things that no longer belonged to her life. Slowly, the bag filled up with crumbled newsprints, dead plants and empty chocolate boxes.

"There. Much better."



# When you arrive

-Saman A W Khan

And when you arrive I'll show you  
the empty spaces I've kept-  
for you even before I knew you-  
my heart knew  
I was meant to have a great love.

The kind the treasures of the earth await  
as they slumber in silence for a human  
to stumble upon them one day-  
and make it their home  
they relish in glorious grace  
for what could be an eternity  
and I must learn a thing or two

for I keep on looking around  
mistaking bright nights as an  
omen of nearing dawn-  
and I can't seem to stop  
wondering-  
when it will be the time  
to turn all the lights  
and reveal  
the shadows in me-  
untouched.

*(as published in Voice Notes I Never Sent to You)*



# Next Christmas

- *Aimee Nicole*

All I want to do is watch you saw down a small  
Christmas tree on a farm in Connecticut.  
I'll grab rope from the counter and two hot chocolates,  
sip beside the car, and watch you tie our prize atop the roof.  
We'll drive through the winding back roads listening to a  
pre-made playlist, my hand relaxed on your thigh.  
You'll drag the tree up three flights of stairs to  
our new place, cozy with gas heat.  
A record player charms us from the kitchen while we string  
up lights and unpack ornaments — bridging two lives.



## First Night for Ben

- *Aimee Nicole*

Our first night together was written by our sign,  
Twins setting off on a predetermined  
adventure with Mercury entering retrograde.  
Cars drifted by as we became known to each other,  
a week's worth of anticipation finally  
released in the backseat of your Ford Focus.  
You pulled me closer under the hazy  
Halloween sky and we danced. I'd never  
danced like that before with a man.  
Your right hand wrapped tight around my waist,  
your left leading me through the dirt lot. You spun me around  
and I swear I saw stars through the clouds.  
I wore my hoodie home to hide my messy scarecrow hair,  
not realizing I had a hickey the size of a  
coffee rim stain on my neck.  
Swollen deep as a plum, I fingered it in the  
bathroom mirror while my cat  
meowed for her delayed dinner.  
I laid in bed late into the midnight hour craving  
your touch once more, letting the sweet smell of  
your sweat comforts me into a dreamless sleep.

# chasing shadows x edward studeez

**Hello edward! Thanks a ton for being a part of our inaugural issue. To begin with, what drew you towards the world of music?**

Hi! Thank you for the opportunity! Music runs in my family's blood. My grandpa played the harmonica when he was stationed over in Germany during the war. That was passed down to me in my later days. I've always had an ear for music though. When I was in about second grade, I remember telling my best friend to this day that I had a dream of starting a band. We were all for it. The love for Sound and music is what drew me in. I've always had a thing for playing new music for people, it's just... fulfilling. Music is a universal language and allows me to connect and speak directly to everyone on Earth without having to say a "word".



*edward studeez- music producer, dj*

**You have had a great start towards music indeed. What challenges did you anticipate when you were just a beginner? How did you come across them?**

Honestly, I never anticipated challenges. I do it because I love it, so no matter if I'm playing for myself and a buddy, or a crowd of thousands, it's all the same to me. I'm spreading the love through the tunes I play so as long as I lighten a heart, it's a job well done.

**Did your passion for music have deliberate planning right from the start or did it gradually develop?**

It gradually developed. I first started as a sound engineer when I was about 16 years old. I recorded artists, developed their sound, mixed and mastered songs, etc. I then stepped into the business side of things, took



courses in music industry management, and started an event company that got major traction. I oversaw a DJ and a marketer that were on my team. After college, I took a step back and focused on my spirituality and belief system. This gave me a set of moral and ethical principles and allowed me to step into DJing myself and flourish as an artist.

**Looking within ourselves does lead us to our dream path. Who is your most favorite artist? Why?**

I can't say that I have a favorite artist. With so many different genres in electronic music alone, then when you take another step back you have rock, blues, jazz, hip-hop, and so many more that if I were to have a favorite artist it would be disrespectful to other artists' creative freedom and backgrounds. We are all one in the world of music, no matter what stage you play, we're all equally gifted in our own way.

**What kind of musical instruments do you own? Which among them is your favorite?**

I own a djembe, a handpan, and two harmonicas. More free-flowing instruments as I use them to meditate and come up with ideas. Of course, I can't leave out my computer lol. But my favorite among them is the handpan. It touches the soul.

**That's amazing! How much time do you take to create a single album? Can you take us through the process?**

The process differs every time, the only thing that doesn't differ is that I never force it. I create in my own time when I can feel Sound flowing through me. My newest release is titled {Architecture} and will be released independently on vinyl and cassette tape. This will be performed live before its release, the date is to be announced so stay on the lookout! My Instagram, @edward\_studeez, will be full of everything that you need to know.

**We can't wait to listen to it! What are you currently working on?**

I'm currently working on a mix featuring Yeti Mind Tricks. Check him out, he's an amazing techno artist and he just dropped a new album. The mix will be available on [edwardstudeez.com](http://edwardstudeez.com) on Tuesday, June 15th. I'm also working with a few other artists overseas which will be released later in July and August. My last releases were done through Mensla Records and AudioVisio. They both feature a ton of other amazing artists so it's worth checking out!

**If given a chance, would you teach music to budding musicians one day?**

Of course! I already have the opportunity to do so and take every chance I get for the ears that are willing to listen. I work in a music store that



sells all of the gear you could dream of, so in my downtime, it's a playground. I have a lot of people come in with questions and I'll sit down with them and help them expand their music to the next level.

**What would your ideal *vorfreude*- joyful anticipation be?**

To bring everyone together through the sounds pieced together to create music. There's been enough division on Earth taking away from our true purpose. That true purpose is to come together and love one another, help each other, support each other. You can learn this from the life of plants. This is exactly how they act. They pass nutrients to other trees wirelessly through their root systems. They don't charge a fee and look at them flourishing. So I'd love to see the world get away from the idea of "how much are you going to pay me?", so we can get back to our own roots.

**If you have to give a word of advice to your younger self, what would that be?**

Listen to your elders, they are wise beyond your comprehension.

**Check out edward studeez at-**



# The Passing Storm

- Sara Ashton

Mindless clouds  
Scattered around –  
Fall at the drop  
Of rain,  
When the wind  
Makes its ungentle  
Sound.

Caressed,  
The trees flow  
Freely, dancing –  
They mingle with  
The air unwinding.

The rain beats  
Heavier  
As the clouds  
Become darker.

Though the storm  
Is inevitable,  
The world  
Always gets  
Brighter.

Caught up with  
Memories  
I rather regret.

You are always  
In my mind,  
A constant torment.

The shadows you  
Made, still sometimes  
Appear

In the dark of  
Night, when my  
Mind is vulnerable,  
And my heart full of fear

This time of vulnerability  
And thought will not  
Let me easily forget  
Your arrow may fly –  
But I am not your target

Find another to  
Help string your bow,  
I will leave you behind –  
Each day I grow.

# Mindful Kindness

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*"Too often, life slips by."*

---

*- Swati Moheet Agrawal*

I am sitting in a fancy café drinking celery juice from a tall glass. As a matter of fact, I am not the kind of person who can seat herself in some sordid eatery and order the same beverage day after day and imbue herself entirely in one fluid.

About ten minutes later, a gorgeous woman sporting peg-top trousers and a tight polo-neck T-shirt saunters through the stylish teak wood door. The attire shows off her shapely figure. A delicate diamond bracelet is dangling from her dainty wrist. A leaf-shaped diamond ring adorns her perfectly manicured finger. She takes a seat next to my table, surveys the café just as I had done and orders an acai bowl. Our eyes meet but I quickly glance in another direction.

I am afraid to even smile at strangers, let alone make conversation with them, especially strangers who are endearingly beautiful and look like they speak impeccable English.

Once again I sneak a glance in the woman's direction. She is solitary, but self-assured; she is comfortable in her skin. She is not compulsively staring into her cell phone, fidgeting with her hair or squirming in her seat. She is fully immersed in the present moment - mindful, unselfconscious, composed and collected. Not only do I admire her flawless looks but also her calm demeanour. I wish I could radiate an aura like that.

Instinctively, I pull out my diary and scribble the words tumbling out of my head:

*Too often, life slips by. We're in one place, doing one thing but thinking of things we aren't doing and places we aren't at. We have forgotten to slow down and enjoy life. Dolce far niente, as the Italians would have it.*

*Far from frowning and fidgeting, huffing and puffing or waiting impatiently for her meal to arrive, the woman seated next to me appears to be incredibly calm. She is unhurried and in-the-moment. Her eyes, nose and mouth are perfectly aligned. She is alone, and she is not busying herself with a book, browsing Instagram or texting – she is looking around, taking in the surroundings, listening to the soft music, as if she feels alive, right here, right now. She seems to have made a mindfulness date with herself, but, lo and behold, a frantic waiter loses his balance and a bowl of edamame salad lands on her trousers. She is hassled but she regains her composure almost immediately. He apologizes profusely and she is kind enough to let it go. “Hope you didn’t hurt yourself,” she empathizes with the waiter before proceeding to the washroom to clean herself. She has me gaping in awe.*

***Among the misfortunes and devastations of life is this then – kindness, and kindness matters as much as mindfulness, together they have the power to transform our lives. The woman relaxed into the situation and didn’t let it overpower her. Instead of reacting mindlessly, she chose to respond mindfully.***

*It is possible to generate warmth and kindness towards everyone, even those who have spilled edamame salad on your sexy peg-top trousers.*

*Even a trivial encounter with a passing stranger can give us a sense of perspective. Every meeting, exchange or encounter, with everyone from a friend to a stranger, no matter how brief or profound, matters in the grand scheme of things, it is all connected and potentially significant.*

*My disoriented mind is pieced together by some perception. I have much to learn. I find myself even more entranced than I was at the beginning.*



## Looking Out

- *Skye Morandin*

*Apartment high rises interest me, and I had wanted to take a photo of this one for a while especially when it seemed so peaceful. Initially I didn't see the woman in the photo, and I was very glad to see that I had captured her in her moment of reflection.*

# The Shadow

- *Keech Ballard*

I had a little shadow that used to follow me  
It was always very faithful  
Friend for life it seemed to be  
Dedicated to my cause and mine alone.

My shadow left me suddenly  
I knew not where to look  
It was hidden so effectively  
Like someone slammed [spammed/shut] the book.

I have searched and sought forever  
But forever could not tell  
Me where in all infinity  
My shadow chose to dwell.

I am lost and gone forever  
With no shadow to prove real  
My existence in eternity  
This is my ordeal.

Who can help me in my peril?  
Who can help me find my soul?  
Which is lost and gone forever  
With no coin to freight the toll.

With apologies to Robert Louis Stevenson





# THE SEASON BETWEEN

- Jason Melvin

Birds again sing the rising of the sun  
Mornings are seen breath and frosted  
clovers

Afternoons are t-shirts and dog-walking  
gnarled branches scattered in yards  
bald leafless trees reach high  
Alive but not yet filled with life  
fall's leaves and litter visible  
again

spring will make the world green  
again

but right now

the brown

the trodden down

the understated beauty at the end

before it all begins

again





# a moment

- Jason Melvin

dusk shines through the curtains  
shadows in the folds  
light plays off the high-backed chair  
long shadows on the wall  
crooked elongated  
dark on dark

dusk falls off the curtains  
quickly as it came  
shadows drop    fade

# The Post-Covid Clock

- Sreekanth Kopuri

*old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

- 2 Corinthians 5:17

Watch! Another!

A silent watchman's

Time to re-wind

To unwind meanings

Of death in life

Time records

Discord in the

Cord of mother

Earth's labor pains

With the burden of the

Preset Eleventh

Hour's alarm, the

Lockdown to earth's

Narrowest space for

It's time to set off

The old clock to

Word's news about

The rapturous moment



# Another egg

- *Sreekanth Kopuri*

of a summer-white smile  
of another Easter,

a sunny lesson  
of a luminescent morning

laid against the sands  
of some more circles,

the grace that loves  
every handful of dust, waits

under those warm wings  
of Love's patient time

that hatches for the  
earth's last pages

that flicker in its ears  
whispering the secret

that will crack open with  
a cluck – a sign of last trumpet.

# My Language is

– *Sreekanth Kopuri*

something that crumbles  
with the bruised touch  
of the Silence,

the living weapon i need  
to fight by, born without  
a tongue,

a death with unbroken bones  
dripping with dry beads of thirst –  
the words

of its throat, muted by our thorns  
of darkness in its flesh that fails  
only to win

over the sharpened edges  
of our beliefs that sickle  
and hammer

to join hands with their objective  
comrades that bluster against  
the Word



trust

- fer aracena

The day complete, I stumble  
alone toward home, arms empty  
but filled with butterflies.

Fireworks crawl across my lips  
as champagne bubbles burst  
unseen inside my fingertips.

You gone, I reach for the taste  
of home, but fresh toast is far too cold  
to warm me. The boiling soap  
is frigid. Music sits bland in my ear.

The mattress feels empty, and inside  
your over-large sweatshirt, I am too small  
to warm it. The stars in my eyes  
begin yawning. They disappear behind  
eyelids. Your kiss goodbye still sits  
where my lipbalm should be, tucked  
between layers of dehydrated skin.

In an airport, miles away, butterflies  
adrift in an acidic suitcase are winding  
their way through metallic fortresses.  
And you have one still sweaty palm  
placed on luggage and flowers eclipsing  
the dimples in your cheeks.

And my breath holds a secret  
desire for fireworks to shatter  
back into place and return  
my heart right to me.

## phantom limb

- *Alix Brobbey*





**sneeuwkllokje**

(n.) dutch word for a snowdrop flower





# Sneeuwklokje

- *Alix Brobbey*

*head bent, like a sprouting flower,  
he tiptoes gently across my thoughts,  
brown and still cold from winter.*

*white curls flop across his forehead,  
droopy and swaying shyly, quietly  
masking the blue keys to spring.*

*someday, with trembling limbs,  
he may kneel in the dirt and hand  
me crystals plucked from his stems.*

*for now, he sits melancholy, legs  
tightly pulled towards his torso,  
green and facing tomorrow.*

# Summer time in Ireland

- Grace O'Reilly

The four S's of Summer are, Sky, Sun, Sea, and Sand.

Summer to my sister means hay fever, and to others, it means SAD's. Most people affected by SAD's suffer from the winter blues and tend to feel better with the brighter weather. For me, while mentally I feel better in myself and I do have more energy, unfortunately I tend to get more headaches and it makes me more tired. I need to have at least one nap daily, which can get me down, so I avoid the sun at its strongest when it is possible between the hours of 12 and 3 pm. I have fibromyalgia, and the extreme temperatures affect me both pain and fatigue-wise. The Irish winters do be too cold, and the summers over the last decade, (with global warming and climate change) are too hot. I love the spring and the autumn for the temperature, like *Baby Bear in Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, the temperature is just right!


To me, summertime is a time of living and enjoying nature and the outdoor life, as much as possible. Living in Ireland, we have lots of wet and cold days, and not as many nice and hot dry days, where we do not worry about wearing heavy coats and bringing an umbrella, (although in Ireland, you really should carry an umbrella at all times anyway. In Ireland, we can have the four seasons in just one day)! Summertime means hiking and surfing, picnics and BBQs, outdoor festivals and events, as well as camping under the stars, around a fire toasting marshmallows and telling ghost stories, or having a sing-song.

The summertime is when everything just seems to bloom and come alive, and nature is thriving, busy, and buzzing. The flowers with their sweet scents permeate the air, with the bumblebees hovering from flower to flower collecting pollen. The lush green grass and leaves are alive with blood-red ladybirds crawling away happily, next to the bright yellow buttercups and orange dandelions and

daisies galore, enough to make a gazillion daisy chains. The beautiful butterflies glide happily around the glorious grasslands, drinking in the scenery around them.

The seaside becomes busier than any other time of the year, as people don a bathing suit and try to catch some golden rays upon their skin, getting their required vitamin D also known as the happy vitamin. Some people and dogs paddle and splash about happily, and others swim far out as though to the horizon. Of course, there are the sea worshippers who swim all year daily and I salute them for their bravery in plunging into the icy waters in mid-December or January, although I have heard that it is good for your body, mind, and soul. Perhaps, I would brave it if I lived nearer to the sea, (I did the Ice-Bucket Challenge a few years ago) and that was chilly! Children play happily on the sand, digging great big holes, and building sandcastles, that are not complete without seashells or stone décor and perhaps a Lego figure of Barbie doll propped beside it. Some people hop aboard a surfboard, while others search for rockpools and jellyfish. Seagulls soar high in the air and swoop down when the time is right to steal a chip or piece of bread from a picnic feast.

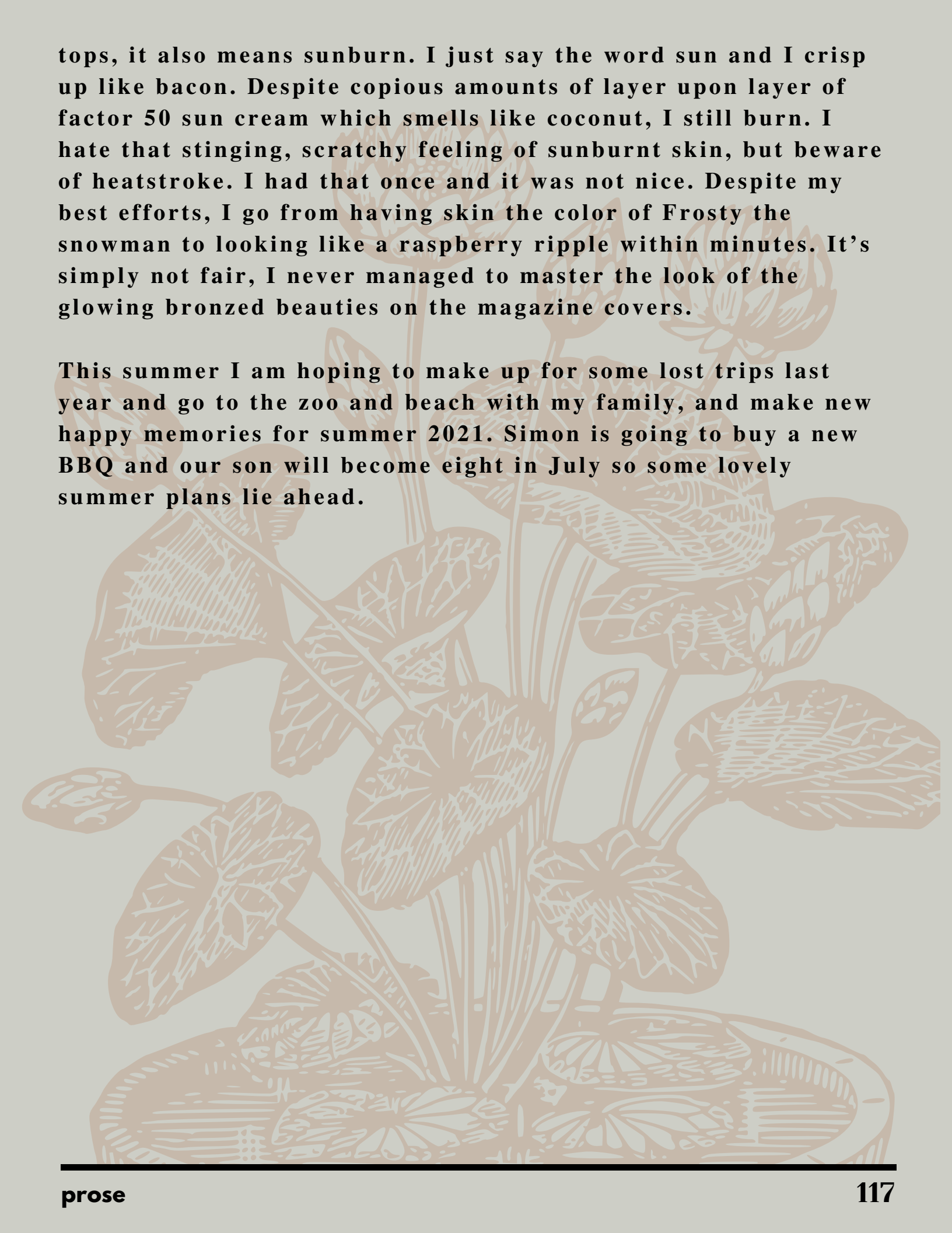
Summer just simply is not summer, without ice cream cones, big whippy 99s with sprinkles, syrup, and of course a Cadbury flake on top. Although, living in an estate with a ten and an almost eight-year-old, the ice cream van is a bane for me and my husband, with its irritating tune blaring, three times a day. Even Misty- our dog knows the ice cream van and looks pleadingly at us in the hope that she will get a cone. We buy her the occasional plain baby cone (because, no chocolate for dogs)! So, the ice cream van is bad head wise, weight wise and pocket wise! The odd 99 is a must though, and with all the works. Our children love that ghastly bubble-gum flavour, or yucky slush puppies, maybe I am just old and boring, although I am 37 with pinkish red hair, so maybe I'm just old.



Ice cold beer like a Corona light with a wedge of lime or lemon will suffice, and something delicious from the BBQ, surrounded by friends and family and laughter. A sparkling prosecco adorned with a strawberry is divine, with a fresh garden salad and a good book on your own in peace, with some tunes playing away, for me 80's and 90's dance and pop music, or some chilled out classical piano. Listening to the blackbirds and robins chirping happily in the trees, eating a fat juicy worm occasionally, plucked from the soil. Heaving fruit bushes are ready for the picking- strawberries, raspberries, tomatoes, rhubarb, etc. The smell of the fresh-cut grass, BBQs with the charcoal-cooked meat smell, and the nice whiff of freshly washed clothes with the floral detergent drying on the clothesline in my own or the surrounding gardens. I love the longer brighter days and adore waking up to the sound of the birdsong melodies, and blissfully falling asleep while listening to the nocturnal birds awaking in the evening time. This summer should be a happier one for many, as last summer was anxiety-driven and lonely. Now, with the vaccines being administered, and the restrictions being lifted, life is beginning to slowly return to normality.

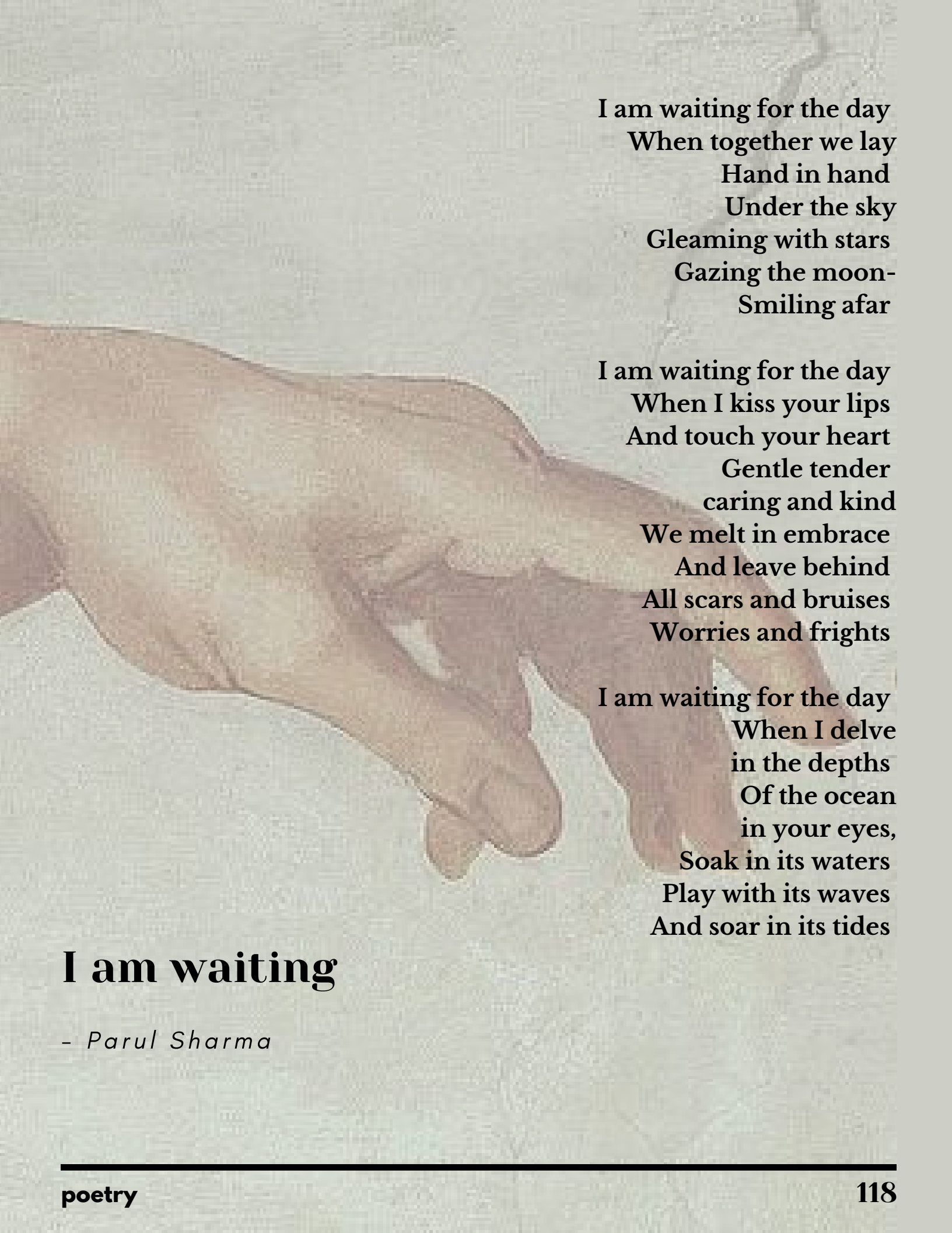
The woods are like a secret haven, if you get there at the right time, i.e. after 8 pm or before 9 am. Our dog loves to run around freely, wagging her tail happily, sniffing and peeing on everything in sight. She is an exception to the typical female dog and likes to mark her territory everywhere. We bring poo bags and clean up her mess. The lovely strong smell of the wild garlic pervades through the warm breezy air. You can hear owls sleeping blissfully high up in the tree, unlike the mouse in the Gruffalo stories by Julia Donaldson and Axel Sheffler, I have never come across owl ice cream! The bluebells and wildflowers grace the woodlands with their radiant colors and beauty.

Summertime means wearing my straw hat, flip flops, and string



tops, it also means sunburn. I just say the word sun and I crisp up like bacon. Despite copious amounts of layer upon layer of factor 50 sun cream which smells like coconut, I still burn. I hate that stinging, scratchy feeling of sunburnt skin, but beware of heatstroke. I had that once and it was not nice. Despite my best efforts, I go from having skin the color of Frosty the snowman to looking like a raspberry ripple within minutes. It's simply not fair, I never managed to master the look of the glowing bronzed beauties on the magazine covers.

This summer I am hoping to make up for some lost trips last year and go to the zoo and beach with my family, and make new happy memories for summer 2021. Simon is going to buy a new BBQ and our son will become eight in July so some lovely summer plans lie ahead.



I am waiting for the day  
When together we lay  
Hand in hand  
Under the sky  
Gleaming with stars  
Gazing the moon-  
Smiling afar

I am waiting for the day  
When I kiss your lips  
And touch your heart  
Gentle tender  
caring and kind  
We melt in embrace  
And leave behind  
All scars and bruises  
Worries and frights

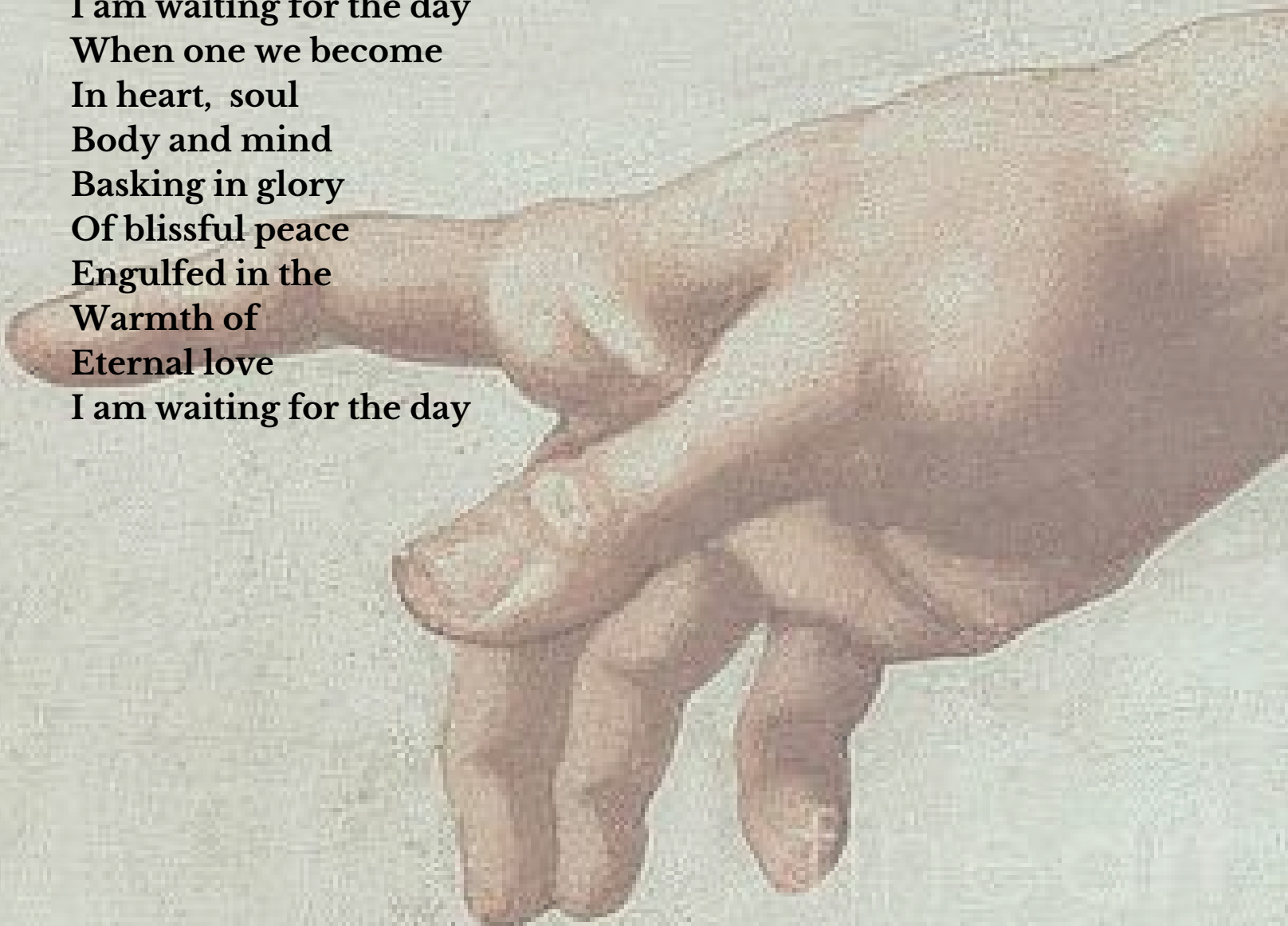
I am waiting for the day  
When I delve  
in the depths  
Of the ocean  
in your eyes,  
Soak in its waters  
Play with its waves  
And soar in its tides

# I am waiting

- Parul Sharma

I am waiting for the day  
When we build  
A heaven  
Far away from  
This forlorn world  
Smiles and laughter  
Adorn the walls  
Fragrance of love  
Flows along

I am waiting for the day  
When one we become  
In heart, soul  
Body and mind  
Basking in glory  
Of blissful peace  
Engulfed in the  
Warmth of  
Eternal love  
I am waiting for the day

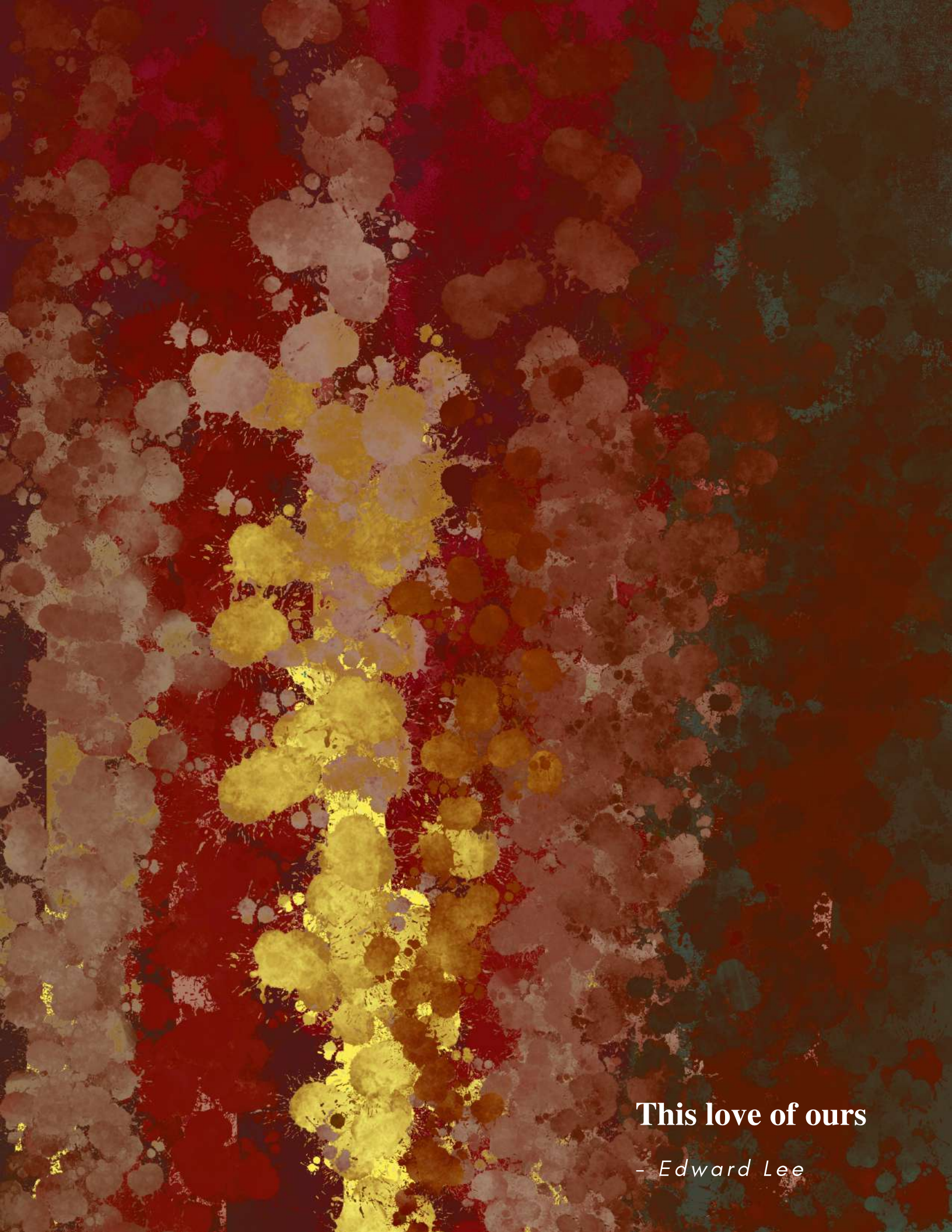




**Ever**

- *Edward Lee*





**This love of ours**

*- Edward Lee*

# issue 01

## contributors

### highlights

We are happy to feature the voices of 54 amazing creatives from different parts of the world. This issue represents several countries such as India, America, Peru, Australia, Chile, United Kingdom, Philippines, Vietnam, Pakistan, and Ireland.

#### **DIONYSUS**

*Dionysus is a fifteen-year-old senior high school student who hails from the pearl of the orient, Philippines. While they wait for graduation, Dionysus tries their best to rack their brain around words to create gentle yet compelling pieces of writing.*

#### **SAMINA PARVEEN**

*Samina is a young artist, poet, graphic designer, writer, and YouTuber. She would love to make a change in this world. In her free time, she likes to play the piano, making short films, and writing poems. She has published her pieces in various magazines like Ice Lolly Review, Potted Purple, In the Write Blog, All Ears India, Bloom Magazine, Hearth Magazine,*

*Overachievers Magazine, Star-Gazette Magazine, Storymirror, Culturally and many more. She has participated in TYWI open mics, Culturally open mics, The Youth Magazine Poetry Reading Events. She is the Founder & Editor and Graphic Designer at Inertia Teens and Graphic Designer, Web Manager, and Marketing at Star-Gazette and a member of Novel Minority.*

#### **L J IRETON**

*LJ is an emerging poet from London, especially inspired by nature and fascinated by medieval history. She has a 1st Class B.A. Honours in English Language and*

*Literature from The University of Liverpool. Her historical poem 'The Chapel Stars' was published in the April 2021 Marble Poetry Broadsheet and her nature poem 'The Magpie' will be published by Minnow Literary Magazine in May 2021.*

#### **DESHANE SHORT**

*DeShane Short (He/ Him) is a proud Afro-American male from New Kent, Virginia who is currently a student at Longwood University, where he is majoring in English with a concentration in creative writing with an interest in poetry and non-fiction. Minor in children's literature and communication studies. DeShane hopes to pursue an MFA in creative writing.*

*DeShane's instagram handle is @deshaneshort.*

#### **OLI DAVIES**

*Journalism student studying at Goldsmiths University of London.*

#### **FER ARACENA**

*Educational psychologist interested in making collage, vintage art and bullet journal.*

#### **EMILY BRYANT**

*Emily is an English Literature student with a love for writing. She is passionate about writing on women's and LGBTQ+ experiences and issues, providing well-researched ideas and concepts for any readership. She is currently based in South Wales and enjoys photography, writing and playing tabletop role playing games.*

## **ANUMM HABIB**

Anumm, born and raised in Pakistan is a business student with a flair for everything aesthetic. She is a chai over coffee, pulao over biryani, beaches over mountains and sunrise over sunsets kind of person who is very fond of good books and movies. Her instagram (@nummness) shows her love for photography and takes us to a whole new world seen through her eyes!

## **WILL NUESSELE**

Mr. Will Nuessle (42) of Colorado holds a third-degree brown belt in ninjutsu; rides a Harley; primary care gives three small boys and claims he can recite the alphabet backwards in less than ten seconds. He also writes occasionally; his words may be found in *Borderless Journal*, the *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, the premiere issue of *Portmanteau Magazine* and he just won second place in Page Turner's Short Poetry Contest!

## **MEGAN PITT**

Megan is an aspiring novelist and writer. She can often be found staring

at pictures of Paris, sipping on something pink, and typing away on her computer. Writing is her passion, the love of her life and someday she hopes to produce a New York Times bestseller.

## **AINSLEY BERG**

Ainsley Berg (she/her/hers) is a nineteen-year-old English student at Flagler College in Saint Augustine, Florida. Her work appears in the most recent issue of *The Pointed Circle*. She can be found on Instagram as @ainsel.bee, along with several pictures of her cat.

## **LILLI ROOT**

Lilli is a bi, depressed woman. Her work focuses on her depression and mental health, drawing attention to the feeling of hopelessness and dread she so often experiences. Lilli loves horror movies, Star Wars, and embroidery.

## **NICHOLAS PERKINS**

Nicholas Perkins lives in Sydney, Australia. He works in education and has been a primary school principal, with a background that also

the arts, neuroscience and behavioural ecology.

Poetry and music are Nick's preferred media for personal meaning-making. Nick's poems have appeared in various online publications including *Blue Bottle Journal*, *InDaily – Poet's Corner*, *The Minison Zine*, *The Rye Whiskey Review* and *Mantissa Poetry Review*.

## **P R AUGUSTINA MAHANTA**

P.R. Augustina Mahanta is a 19 year old teenager who is a resident of India. She is currently preparing for her NEET entrance examinations. Her dream is to become a singer but she also loves to write short prompts and writeups, draw and dance as her hobbies.

## **RILEY DANVERS**

Riley Danvers is a bisexual poet living in Portland, Oregon. She has an A.S. in English from Clackamas Community College and a B.A. in English Literature and Writing from Marylhurst University. She is in the

process of completing her M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the Pacific Northwest College of Art. Her poetry has been published in *Silkworm*, *The Clackamas Literary Review*, *Anomaly Literary Journal*, *Other Wordly Women's Press*, and *Z Publishing House*. One poem is forthcoming from *Clackamas Literary Review*.

## **TANVI NAGAR**

Tanvi Nagar is a high school senior and dreams to study psychology at her dream college. She has published 4 books and loves to read, write and travel. She believes kindness and compassion is the best way of life!

## **CLAY HUNT**

Clay Hunt is the author of the chapbook, *Born Shane*, from *Two Key Customs*. His forthcoming chapbook, *Young Went the Sun Went Down*, is being published by *Budget Press*. He loves his cat. He is of Bajor.

## **SKYE MORANDIN**

Skye is an amateur photographer who exclusively uses film cameras and enjoys

toying with focus and composition. She enjoys finding interesting things in the mundane, and to focus on the feeling of an image versus having solely a technically good photo.

## **ARPITA SINGH**

Arpita Singh is a published author and poet, who works as a freelance content writer. Pursuing the 3rd year of Bachelor of Arts, she explores the ancient relics of English literature. She harbors a keen interest in studying human behavior, analyzing matters relating to sociology and politics. She has contributed three poems to *Melodies of Spring*; two poems to *The Verses Of Pounding Hearts*; two short stories to *Written on the Stars*; and a letter story to *Lockdown Diaries*. She has secured 1st prize for her entry- *His Only Thing that Remains* in a national level competition, *Muse with Thinkly*, and 2nd prize in *Literary Bohemian* for her short story- *Sukhi Gets to Meet her Mother Again*.

## **AIMEE NICOLE**

Aimee Nicole is a queer

poet currently residing in Rhode Island. She holds a BFA in Creative Writing from Roger Williams University and has been published by the *Red Booth Review*, *The Nonconformist*, and *Voice of Eve*, among others. For fun, she enjoys attending roller derby bouts and trying desperately to win at drag bingo.

## **CHRIS MARDIROUSSIAN**

Chris Mardiroussian is a graduate student at California State University, Long Beach. In 2018, he won First Prize in the *Cinema Italian Style Film Festival* (sponsored by the prestigious American Cinematheque in Los Angeles) for his short film entitled *IL BREAKUP*, which he co-wrote and produced. In 2017, he co-wrote a collection of poetry entitled *HONESTY. LOVES. CRUELTY*. His work has appeared in *Soul Talk Magazine*, *Bloom Magazine*, *Sunstroke Magazine*, *Bluntly Magazine*, and elsewhere. He lives in Glendale, California.

## **REGINE EBNER**

Regine is a full-time Montessori teacher at a school she founded in Tucson, Arizona. She co-authored a play, *Minor Details*, which was performed in Tucson and she has a chapter in the book *Reimagining Shakespeare for Children*, by Naomi Miller. She also co-authored a piece for the *Individual Psychology* journal out of Switzerland. Most recently, her poem *Gifts* appeared in *Sledgehammer Lit*. Regine has returned to writing poetry with enthusiasm and joy.

## **UDITA MUKHERJEE**

Udita Mukherjee is from Kolkata, India. Her short story 'The Lemon and the Window' was selected for the March 2021 issue of *Kloud9* whose editor-in-chief is Ruskin Bond. *Kloud9* also published her poem which used a broken glass lamp as a metaphor for people being treated like abused possessions in their April 2021 issue. The first play she wrote titled *Appendix* was chosen by *Bombay Theatre*

*Company for The Theatre Project 2020* and can be found in the IGTV section of their Instagram page (<https://www.instagram.com/tv/CH5Utd1pUjK/?igshid=kdj67wx77end>). She has won several international writing contests.

## **LEE TRAN & MAISIE CU**

Lee and Maisie became friends when they were 12. Both growing up in different culture with Lee in Japan, Vietnam then Canada ; Maisie in Vietnam, England, NZ and Canada, they bond over a sense of identity and longing for home. Lee is currently at University of Manitoba pursuing her degree toward Agribusiness and Maisie is currently trained as a painter at The Ontario College of Art and Design.

## **EDWARD LEE**

Edward Lee is an artist and writer from Ireland. His paintings and photography have been exhibited widely, while his poetry, short stories, non-fiction have been published in magazines in Ireland, England and

America, including *The Stinging Fly*, *Skylight 47*, *Acumen* and *Smiths Knoll*. He is currently working on two photography collections: 'Lying Down With The Dead' and 'There Is A Beauty In Broken Things'. He also makes musical noise under the names *Ayahuasca Collective*, *Orson Carroll*, *Lego Figures Fighting*, and *Pale Blond Boy*. His blog/website can be found at <https://edwardmlee.wordpress.com>

## **OORMILA VIJAYAKRISHNAN PRAHLAD**

Oormila Vijayakrishnan Prahlad (she/her) is an Indian-Australian artist, poet, and pianist. She has been painting and exhibiting for over twenty years and her art and poetry have been widely published in both print and online journals. Her recent artworks have been showcased in *Otoliths*, *3 AM Magazine*, and *The Amsterdam Quarterly*, and on the covers of *Ang(st) the body zine*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Uppagus*, *Periwinkle Literary*, and

*The Rat's Ass Review*. She is a chief editor for *Authora Australis*.

## **SIMRAN KAUR**

Simran Kaur is a surrealist still life, product, and creative portrait photographer and artist. She is Punjabi and she is currently based in London. Simran's main objective is to make the viewer's dreams come true by creating intriguing setups, but she does also create mental health or, recently, environmental awareness. At the same time, she also creates dreamlike abstract visuals to make the viewer look at another reality.

## **ANACIA SESSOMS**

Anacia Sessoms is a 17 year old model, creative director, visual artist, fashion designer, graphic designer, and photographer from New Jersey. She is inspired by the movement and vibrancy of nature through her Art. Her art is her voice. Her artwork each tells a story about life within nature, one that we can't see through the naked eye. She tells the story of the beauty and essence of life, through colors and creativity. Her goal is to use her voice to

tell her view of the world through her art. Art is part of her connection to the breakthroughs and transformation of life.

## **MAISIE CU**

Maisie is a Third Culture artist who grew up between different countries. She is based in Toronto and currently undergoing her training at Ontario College of Art and Design. Her works concern with childhood and a return of home. She believes her mode of adaption is expression and the reclaim in meaning of self.

## **LINDA EVE DIAMOND**

Linda Eve Diamond's award-winning poetry has been performed at Artist Embassy Dancing Poetry Festival, screened at the REELpoetry International Poetry and Video Film Festival, displayed at the Museum of Art - DeLand, and published by numerous journals and anthologies. Find her poetry, photography and flash fiction at <http://LindaEveDiamond.com>.

## **LEO KANG**

Leo Kang lives in Yorkshire, England. He is young and hopes to make art that lasts one day.

## **PAULINA FREEDMAN**

Paulina Freedman is a writer,

avid reader, amateur chef, and occasional artist living in the suburbs of Chicago. She has an MA in Writing and Publishing from DePaul University, has studied poetry and fiction writing at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, and is an Associate Poetry Editor at *West Trade Review*. She first fell in love with poetry in her 6th grade Humanities class and has been writing it ever since.

## **FAIRLEY LLOYD**

Fairley Lloyd (she/her) is a 24-year-old writer, editor, and mermaid enthusiast based in North Carolina. She is just learning about astrological signs but is 100% sure she is an Aries. Her work appears in *Giving Room Mag*, *Under the Wires Magazine*, *Press Pause Press*, and elsewhere. Her Twitter and Instagram handles are @fairleylloyd.

## **AMANDA-JANE BAYLISS JOHN GREY**

*Amanda-Jane Bayliss (West Yorkshire, England) works at her local college supporting students with their studies. She encourages them to follow their dreams and reach for the stars. In February 2021 Amanda-Jane practiced what she preached by submitting her work to publishers. In the short time that she has been submitting, her poetry as already appeared in online journals and her upcoming work will feature in a number of anthologies. She was invited to read at the Tablerock Festival that is taking place this summer in Texas. She will also be featured in the upcoming Who's Who of Emerging Writers 2021. Amanda-Jane's Successful Submissions can be found at [www.facebook.com/groups/moresuccessfulsubmissions](http://www.facebook.com/groups/moresuccessfulsubmissions) by [amandajane/](https://www.facebook.com/amandajane/)*

## **DOUG VAN HOOSER**

*Doug Van Hooser's poetry has appeared in Roanoke Review, Sheila-Na-Gig, After Hours, Wild Roof Journal, and Poetry Quarterly among other publications. His fiction can be found in Red Earth Review, Flash Fiction Magazine, and Bending Genres Journal. Doug's plays have received readings at Chicago Dramatist Theatre and Three Cat Productions. More at [dougvanhooser.com](http://dougvanhooser.com)*

*John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in Orbis, Dalhousie Review and the Round Table. Latest books, "Leaves On Pages" and "Memory Outside The Head" are available through Amazon.*

## **ANAMIKA SATHEESH**

*Anamika is an idiosyncratic, melancholic soul from Bangalore working towards her Bachelor's in Journalism, English Literature, and Psychology. During her spare time, she reads, writes, listens to music, obsesses over crime, feeds her addiction for tea, fantasizes walking down the streets of London, binge watches series, and overthinking like it's her day job. She wishes to acquire more random knowledge in various domains, and ultimately aspires to become an investigative journalist.*

## **SWATI MOHEET AGRAWAL**

*Swati Moheet Agrawal is a writer based in Mumbai, India. Her work has appeared in The Criterion, The Dribble Drabble Review, The Pangolin Review, Mad Swirl, Ariel Chart, Café Dissensus, Active Muse, Setu, Kitaab, and is forthcoming in Thimble Lit*

*Mag, The Spring City and Muse India. Follow her on Instagram @swatihowrites*

## **DEIDRE DARBY**

*Deidre Darby (b.1999) is an African American artist based in Montevallo and Huntsville, AL. She is currently working on her BFA degree with a concentration in drawing and graphic design. Her work reflects the female experience and how our socialization affects our worldview.*

## **NASI**

*Nasi is a 27 year old Dutch artist who works with mixed media on paper. The main material she uses is watercolours, but inks, acrylics and oil pastels are also included in her works. The subjects of her artworks are critical thoughts towards contemporary society or herself, often related to the problems with the 'stone-age mind' (i.e. the discrepancy between contemporary society and our stone-age biology). In her work she explores deep emotions, trauma's and existential questions and tries to put them in the context of the evolution theory.*

## **PRANITI GULYANI**

*Praniti Gulyani is a seventeen year old girl from India. A published author and poet, she has been featured in over twenty literary magazines all over the world, and aspires to become a full time author when she grows up.*

## **RAMSHA RIZVI**

*Ramsha Rizvi, a 23 year old woman, living in Lahore; just taking a leap of faith and putting her work out in the open. Her writing is the only source of her finding her identity in this world. For more content look*

at her instagram page with the name of @the\_girl \_with\_the\_blue\_room.

## **JIMENA RAMOS YENGLER**

She published her first book, a romantic novel called "Roma Enamorada" which is available on Amazon. She also have an active YouTube channel where she upload content related to cultural events, interviews, covers and original songs. She is currently pursuing two professional careers "Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation" and "Psychology." In addition, she is in an Actoral Training school, studying Performing Arts.

## **SAMAN A W KHAN**

Saman Abdul Waheed Khan is a poet of South Asian descent, on a mission to find lovers of sunsets, high tides and rainy days. Mostly you will find her cooking Biryani or chasing waterfalls, or both.

## **KEECH BALLARD**

Keech has worked as a check processor, inventory clerk, engineering aide, roustabout, truck loader, research assistant, library aide, parking manager, service

planner, TSM specialist, TDM consultant, bartender, actor, English as a second language instructor, substitute schoolteacher, and college professor. Recent examples of Keech's literary effulgence may be unearthed at: Ellipsis Zine, Outlander Zine, Antipodean SF, A World Away, Analogies & Allegories, Gnashing Teeth, The Magnus Effect, The Drabble, and Kalonopia Collective. Keech wrote his first short story in 1980, his first poem in 1984, his first research monograph in 1985, his first journal article in 1989, and his first academic textbook in 2000. he has seen three of his short stories, four of his poems, and one play published online in the recent past.

## **JASON MELVIN**

Jason Melvin is a father, husband, grandfather, high school soccer coach, and metals processing center supervisor, who lives just outside of Pittsburgh. His work has appeared in Rat's Ass Review, Kitchen Sink Magazine, The Electric Rail, The Front Porch Review, Shambles, Spillover and Last Leaves, among others.

## **SREEKANTH KOPURI**

Sreekanth Kopuri is an Indian English poet from Machilipat-

nam – a colony – India. He was an alumni Writer in Residence, at Strange Days Books Greece. He recited his poetry and presented his research papers in many countries. His poems and research articles were widely published in journals like Heartland Review, Nebraska Writers Guild, Poetry Centre San Jose, Underground Writers Association, Word Fountain, A New Ulster, to mention a few. His book Poems of the Void was the finalist for the EYELANDS BOOKS AWARD. Kopuri is presently an independent research scholar in Contemporary Poetry, silence, and Holocaust poetry. He lives in his hometown Machilipatnam with his mother teaching and writing.

## **ALIXA BROBBEY**

Alix Brobbey spent portions of her childhood in both The Netherlands and Ghana. She has a B.A. degree in English from Brigham Young University, where she won the Academy of American Poets Prize in 2020. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in The Blue Marble Review, Segullah, Inscape, The Albion Review,

The Susquehanna Review, The Palouse Review, and others. She will begin attending BYU Law School in Fall 2021.

## **PARUL SHARMA**

Parul Sharma is a passionate writer in English and Hindi . She loves to express her thoughts in the form of poetry and aspires to touch the lives of readers through her poems, sharing her uplifting life experiences. IG: pearls\_poetry\_n\_more

## **SARA ASHTON**

Sara Ashton is an English & Creative Writing graduate, her passion lies with poetry and it offers her an escape when she needs it. She is currently studying for her Masters in English by Research.

## **DR. MANJUSHA HARI**

*Dr. Manjusha Hari is from Kerala, India. She is a Ph D holder. She is really interested in reading and writing, and always tries to be a part of literary world by writing poetry and articles. She had been published in 2 solo poetry collections in Malayalam and 4 anthologies as a co-author.*

## **GRACE O'REILLY**

*Grace writes an array of writing forms, but her preferred choice is usually poetry or journaling. She is a member of several writing groups, 'The Gorey Writers' in Wexford, Ireland being her longest. Longlisted in 2012 for 'The RTE Guide/Penguin Ireland Short Story Competition', Grace has been published in print in various Literary Journals, magazines, and papers, as well as contributed works in two anthologies 'Fledglings', in 2016 and 'Taken Flight', in 2019, published with 'The Gorey Writers', as well as been published online. She is a team member on a local magazine as well as a book reviewer.*



# CHASING SHADOWS

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