

Voices 2023

An annual publication

In conjunction with International Women's Day every March, the Women's Centre publishes a print Voices anthology of work submitted by Waterloo students that year.

A WUSA Women's Centre publication since 1995.



Welcome to *Voices*

Since 1995, VOICES has been a platform for our students to express their ideas, rejoice in their unique quirks and flaws, and celebrate their stories. In collaboration with WUSA, we would like to share our annual publication VOICES a collection of poetry, short stories, art and photography, with you.

VOICES provides a safe space for artists and writers alike, to convey their feelings, their hardships, and their pains without the fear of judgement. We ask that you read this magazine with an open mind and an accepting heart, ready to challenge your inner biases and understand your peers from a different point of view.

We hope that you will learn to listen to the voices of those who may not have the opportunity to speak up, learn to understand those whose appearance may vary from your own, learn to empathize with the people who continue standing while fighting a battle no one else seems to notice.

So brace yourself for the journey you will take as you scour this magazine—you may find yourself laughing with our writers, their words washing over you like a warm hug or hurting with our poets, feeling the resounding grief fill you. Join us as we celebrate the importance and necessity of intersectionality.

We are incredibly thankful for the artists, poets and writers who bared their innermost thoughts and shared their meaningful pieces with us. Without further ado, it is our honour to present to you the 2023 edition of our annual anthology VOICES.

With love,

Zoya Randhawa, Nikita Srivastava, and Sudiksha Desai

Women's Centre Service Coordinators and Literature Director



She Goes On

by Anusha Akella

Spiralling into an endless hole
Where nothing but darkness awaits
It's no place for her divine soul
Falling into unknown despair that predates.
Yet, she goes on.

Her heart is made of stone, though delicate and fragile.
She wears an armour of steel, though covered in dents.
Her mind an array of colours, though all in a tangle.
Lips forever adorned with a smile, to hide the torment.
Yet, she goes on.

Could that be a ray of hope, seeping through the cracks?
Like a candle flame's glimmer, banishing the shadows.
Like a harmonious melody, dismissing voices that attack.
Like a warm embrace, shielding from piercing arrows.

She goes on.
Because she knows she is not alone.



Romeo and Cinderella

by Malia Rosales - Grant

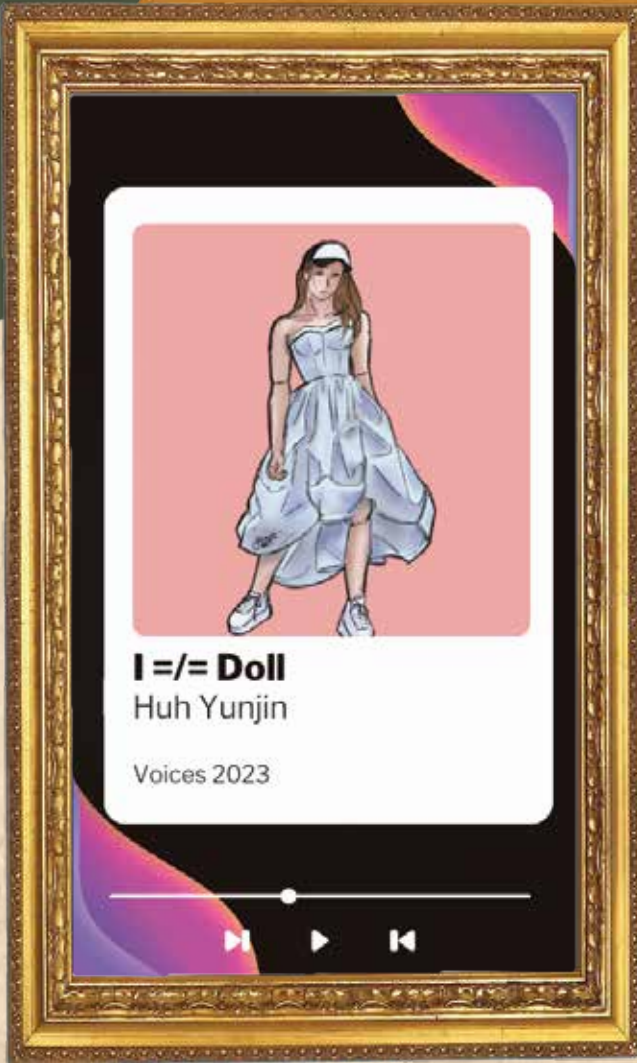
we are not of one tale:
you of Juliet, me of Prince Charming,
ever as frail
the thoughts were still harming.

who are you? i've seen you before.
you've saved me countless times;
five is all i can count, there is more.
you can save me from my own crimes.

you love Juliet while i'm unsure.
Juliet is sweet. Juliet is kind.
Juliet has that certain allure.
Juliet is in your mind.

Romeo was meant for Juliet,
and i, to Romeo, am nothing but upset.





by Yuzuko



Doll
by Yuzuko



The Valley

by Isabelle Bakhsaei

Professor had mentioned many times over of a town that laid on a single path, one of which was tailored by its ghosts. The classically aged buildings that peppered the single trail ran thin with few residents, who spent the length of the hour tending to crops or humming a tune. The valley the town laid in was perpetually washed in a tastefully gray palette regardless of whatever season it may be, and on the queer day or so, a fog would come to tend to the land.

It would lay restfully there, a seemingly still haze utterly unbothered by the lost breeze. However, on the clear enough of a night, with a full enough moon, the odd pair of eyes could peek out back at you if you stared too long at a funny shadow. Oftentimes when everyone had gone to bed, the eyes would extend to some bubble of a head, and then a neck, followed by a misty torso set with a slender set of limbs. The gardeners, the townsfolk referred to them as, took care of the land that held few. Some of them had left fresh flowers or mosses by the feet of trees that they slumbered past, some had taken to molds and mushrooms, but all of them, oh how ever special they were, had painted the land with the ink of the night sky by the moon's filtered light. Thin fingerless palms would reach to the sky to pluck a star to mold it into a raven, with feathers black as night. Or scoop a puddle of the black abyss overhead to water the shrubbery.

The Gift of Spring


by Bibiana Egbunike

At first,
The grief was as thick as the
Nimbostratus clouds
That swallowed the sun
The day you passed
Each strangled breath, a slow gasp
Of what could have been
Of what was lost

Saying goodbye to you had felt like
A thousand needles piercing into my heart
I had gripped your cold fingers
In a fist and refused to let go
Because that was the last version
Of you, I'll ever get to know

But your chartreuse eyes that once
Twinkled with mischief
And quiet assurance
Were vacant and cold





And yet, my soul
Had still reached for yours
Desperately yearning
For the connection we had
But received no answer
And that shattered all residual hope

Then,
The winter of mourning
Was frozen and harsh
Brown shriveled leaves
Frail and rigid, were splattered
Across the parched landscape

And it had constantly
Been a reminder of how you looked
The few days before you left
Your cheeks, sunken and hollow
Your body, a bag of bones
Life was foreign, you know?
The few weeks after your demise
The skies had wept feathery white
And no new life was born

I had been trapped in a trance
And lost in the better days we shared
Days filled with joy, timely innocence
And memories I yearned to trap in a box
So, I would never forget

Now,
The warm golden light
Seeps through the window
As spring approaches
And I feel you
In the air that I breathe
Crisp, with a hint of
Honey and earth

And like the seasons,
Feelings change
The harsh chills of winter fade
As summer conquers the land
And new life
Sprouts from the sea of brown

As nature revives
So does my soul
The slow cool breeze
Becomes a warm caress
And as the birds sing
To welcome the new day
I grow fond of our memories together

At last,
the hardness
In my heart, melts into
Liquid spring



by Isabella McKenzie



Trim

by Kelsey Mar



It's been a year since last we spoke

Snip.

I cast my gaze to the side, watching as the long black piece of hair falls gently to the ground. My mom said she'd liked my long hair, the way it billowed on a windy day and how it swung from side to side in a ponytail.

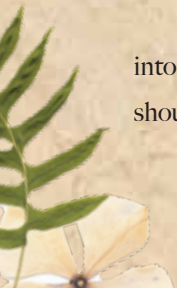
Snip.

Those days, I thought, were long past gone. I'd come to the hairdresser's today with simple directions to chop it all off. She looked quite shocked, but she was in no position to raise an objection- I was a customer willing to pay anything to be rid of it. Her face mirrored the one my mom had worn once I told her the truth.

Snip.

She had a tough time accepting I was no longer the daughter she'd thought I was. My dad was much more open, but to be rejected so quickly by the one who had carried you for so long is an unbearable pain. Perhaps I thought severing what she once cherished so dearly would be a panacea.

Behind me, the hairdresser eased off, grabbing the broom, and sweeping my old remains into a black bucket to be disposed of. Erika sneaks up from behind and places her hands on my shoulder, now unevenly shadowed by my hair. "This is a good change." She says as she places a small



kiss upon the crown of my head. In the mirror, I smile as my eyes meet hers. The hairdresser comes back and readies her scissors as Erika returns to her seat. Her eyes shift back outside, her deep brown eyes reflecting the sunlight casting through the shop window. I return my gaze to my lap as the hairdresser instructs me to bow my head.

Snip.

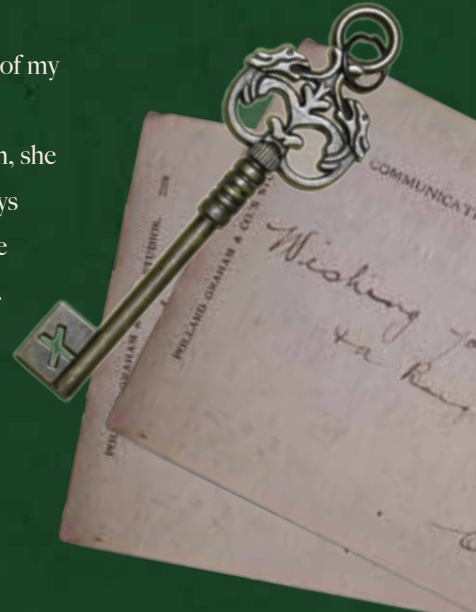
A year ago, I'd never planned that I'd leave behind what I had once deemed so precious, but it was shockingly easy to make the cut. Erika and I had only recently moved in together, and although it had been some time since I had told my parents, my mom still refused to come to our house blessing. My dad told me she was still grappling, but I had my doubts. Perhaps it was a mistake to tell her.

But the deed is done.

Snip.

The hairdresser wipes her brow and smiles with a blow dryer in hand. She blows out the ends and the crown of my head, moving each piece of freshly cut hair into a new place. "Come take a look sweetie." She says as I lift my head. With a smile, she positions the mirror to the back of my head. What was once hair below my breast was now reduced to high above my shoulders.

My gaze turns towards the floor, covered in a black mess of my former self. Tears form at my eyes, but not before Erika once more reassuringly places her hands on my shoulder. Sensing my emotion, she turns to the hairdresser and tips her, "Thank you so much." She says calmly as she removes the hairdressing gown and helps me up. She turns me to face the mirror, to face myself fully and who I truly am. "What do you think?" she asks, stepping back and allowing me space.



I hesitate. Never in my life had my hair been above my shoulders, the person before me was almost unrecognizable, yet familiar. It like I'd known her all this time, yet this was the first time I'd seen her. My eyes continue to well up, "I look like my mom."

Erika smirks and tilts her head. "Is that a bad thing?"

I tuck my hair behind my ear and look back up to meet my own eyes, feeling some renewed strength. Perhaps it's soon time to face her again. I wipe my tears and shake my head. "No," I start, taking a step towards myself, "it's beautiful."

Serendipity

by Diya Drabu





To Be Never Alone in the Darkness

by Kaeli Wolf

An invisible man that watches me sleep. His eyes glow green like a cat's faintly in the darkness, but they flicker in and out like that of a firefly. I feel the presence as he moves closer as I lay in shock in my bed. I feel the warmth of his breathe on my cheek when he says, "I've finally found you." And when his lips touch my cheek ever so gently, I am transported back to the place I used to call my home, but now I can only think of as a prison.

Reflections

by Isabelle Bakshaei

Strangers came and went like the sun rose and set
The museum never truly devoid of several characters
Gazing into the countless stories the brush strokes told
Love and war and hatred was stirred awake
Frames handed reminders of pain and life
To each person who dreamt long enough
To each person who found their own reflection
And thought to themselves
Of the life they live
Of those they love or hate
Of what they mean in the world or to themselves



Hands

by Emma Schuster


Always (only) a campfire guitarist,
My hands sift stiff through the strings.
Short fingers can seldom straddle the notes,
Through neither strength nor size
The fretboard seems to shrink my pain softened palms.

It has always been like this,
The shame of watching juvenile joints
Surpassing what my haggard hands
Could ever do.

It started in my elbows.
Blinding pain
Seeping through me,
Served the classic response
To a woman in crisis –
Snuffing out.

Later this would prove
To only stitch my muscles tighter;
A wound watch with stripped screws.





I remember sixteen:
Nerves shamefully seizing,
Calling my mom upstairs
To dress me
Herporcelain doll of a daughter
Fragile and fading.
She later would lament
Scaring insurers with brazen sobs
About the pens
I no longer knew
How to hold.

Now,
All my exams exist extracellularly,
Apart from the student body.
Forced to let a stranger stylize my scantron
And a computer spit out my sentences,
Sustaining strange looks
As I use the automatic buttons
On the doors
I seem too lazy to lean on.

Penmanship, that was never really there,
Falters with disuse.
My shoulders tighten through the abuse
I put them through
Because I am still too proud
To ask for help.

But I am healing.
I still hiss at the strain of cleaning saucepans
And the shame of standing
Infront of a sinfully slow swinging door.
I still drop things,
Unfeeling of the slip until I hear their sound.
I wonder if it hurts more now
To be loved
By someone who never saw any of it
Now that I am so adept at camouflage.

I have worked so hard to feel this good
And his refusal to acknowledge past pain
Is a blow to my suffering
My strength
My solitude.
But I will forgive him,
As I step out of my pride
And show him everything
That aches.



by Brenda Li

Look at view
As beautiful as you

Across the sea
You can kiss me
And I lie in bed
Dreaming of you
Holding my head
Kissing my lips
In our dreams
We do flips

Holding my hand
With you as
emptiness' stead.



Far too Canadian

by Brenda Li

It's so hot; my igloo's melting
I'm chopping trees, my neighbour's smelting
It's like Minecraft, but our beavers bite!
They lodge in our houses but we never fight
Beer in hand, maple syrup in demand
It's like we don't even own this land!

My hockey game is my pride
To the lake on loonie-wheels we ride
To see the sticks clash and ice skates stroke
At home with bacon sizzling, tepid patriotic inklings we evoke
Yesterday, an American wanted our prized rabbit pelt
"Sorry!" we say, "We gave it to the Brits last night," and knelt.

For WOMAN, LIFE, LIBERTY

By Hediyeh Safari

For dancing in the alleys and street
For the fear of getting caught kissing
For my sister, my brother and unity
For all the times who tried to change their minds and stale beliefs
For the loss of pride
For poverty
For the dream of just a normal life
For you and me
For all the children who are starving for a loaf of bread
For the greed of politics and all the lies they spread
For this command economy
For all the mass polluted air we breathe
For all the litter in the streets and all the dying trees
For Piruz and all the animals who suffer from elimination
For all the cats and dogs who love us without no conditions
For the non-stop crying
For the image of repatriation of this moment
For other tears that seem to never end
For all the images that keep on turning in my heads
For a simple smile to last a little while



For the students

For the future generations fighting for their time

For empty promises a heaven in the afterlife

For all the imprisonment of intellects and beautiful minds

For all the babies who were born and for the ones who died

For all the times you told the truth and all the time you lied

For all the speeches that we heard about a million times

For all this hollow chants

For all the shots and shelters that were sold to megaton

For just a glimpse of a peaceful life

For the rising of the sun after an endless night

For the mental illness

For all the pills we pop just to get some sleep

For men, fatherland, prosperity

For the sake of the girl that wished she was a boy

For All Mankind and our country, Iran

For all the boys and girls who never knew equality

For woman...

For Life...

For liberty...



by Isabella McKenzie





Night (excerpt)

by Isabella McKenzie

Imani crossed her arms. The whirr of the rolling tires beneath them began to weigh her eyelids down. With every sloth blink, the sun trudged towards the horizon. The temperature began to drop as Night started its trance.

The evening air was lead on her limbs. Her brother lay motionless as twilight tucked him in. Travis, however, was as still as a sniper, eyes locked on the open road. The sun faded faster as darkness seeped in like ink on paper. The powerlines cast creeping, spider leg shadows on the pavement.

As they entered their town, darkness threaded the streets, choking out the daylight. Buildings cast thick, deep shadows like spilt milkshakes, and houses were blacked out in a dark mist. Imani's long lashes fluttered closed as darkness sealed the town.

"Goodnight, everyone," Travis said with a sneer.

The car clock read "7:00pm."



Home Invasion

by Kelsey Mar

If home is like a body
How do we study its anatomy?
It's winding hallways the veins that pulsate throughout your arms
Their liminal spaces serving as passageways to your heart
My eyes, the windows, they see all.
Even what we wish would stay deep below.

I was young when you taught me that home wasn't safe.
For as long as I can remember, your words began to weave their way into my locks
Your hands fumbled at the handles before finally finding their way inside.
All those subtle jabs created cracks in the plaster of the hallways:
I can hear every mistake you know. Even from where I'm sitting, I'm watching you.
Even after you left the room
Your presence remained.

Did you know it still haunts me
The time you broke the hinges on the door with so much force
The bruise, the discoloration in my skin you left
I'm still left to scrub the paint off my halls.
When my grandmother saw my misty eyes as I scuttled down the stairs
And when I finally ran to my room to see if anything had been broken, you replied:
What? All I did was pinch her butt a little.

My home, invaded many times
Finally, you broke open my chest
The one where I kept all my childhood trinkets
And tossed them carelessly to the floor.
You stole the paper they gave my mother when I came out crying from the hospital
The one piece of me that was still mine.

Even now, 21 years wise
I'm still repairing those cracks you left with plaster
Although the door's hinges have since been replaced
The disguise you used to sneak into my home still lingers.

I was only 9 years old.

Dare I say it

by Isabelle Bakhshaei

sometimes i just wanna run into your arms
let myself be cradled like a baby
and held tight enough so that nothing else matters
sometimes i wanna reach out and lean on you just for a sec
then i think of how needy i must for that
to need someone else
because i couldn't take any better care of myself



The Fate of a Woman (Excerpt)

by Taizeen Madha

“Absolutely not. You know, I’ve been dealing with the constant sexism and prejudice towards women and people of colour here, but it’s been going on long enough. I quit. You’re right, there’s no future for me here, but I will find someone who will respect me and my work. You’ll see, one day this book will be all over the world, all over the news and my face will be everywhere you look. You’ll regret this.”

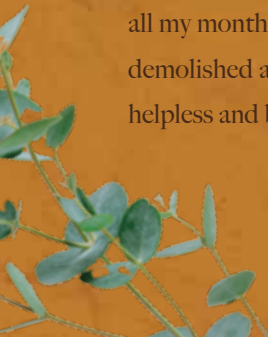
The blue-suit spectator chuckled and walked up to us then. The one in black and white quirked an eyebrow at him and asked, “Would you like to do the honours?”

He handed him my book and I watched, helplessly, as he tore it up, page by page and threw it all on the ground like garbage. Which apparently, I was meant to feel like.

All my hard work, just like that, gone. Right before my eyes and I couldn’t do anything about it. I slowly lowered myself to the ground and attempted to pick up whatever was left.

Blue suit crouched down to look me in the eye and makes sure I hear what he said after grabbing my chin. “We regret nothing, here. If you want to leave, leave, but just know that no other publishing house will take you and your sh*tty work. So, good luck or whatever, Maya.”

And with that, they both left me there, gasping for breath as I stared at all my months of hard work demolished and reduced to nothing, helpless and broken.



But not for long.

I wipe my tears and stand with my back straight and chin upwards. They won't bring me down, not today, not ever.

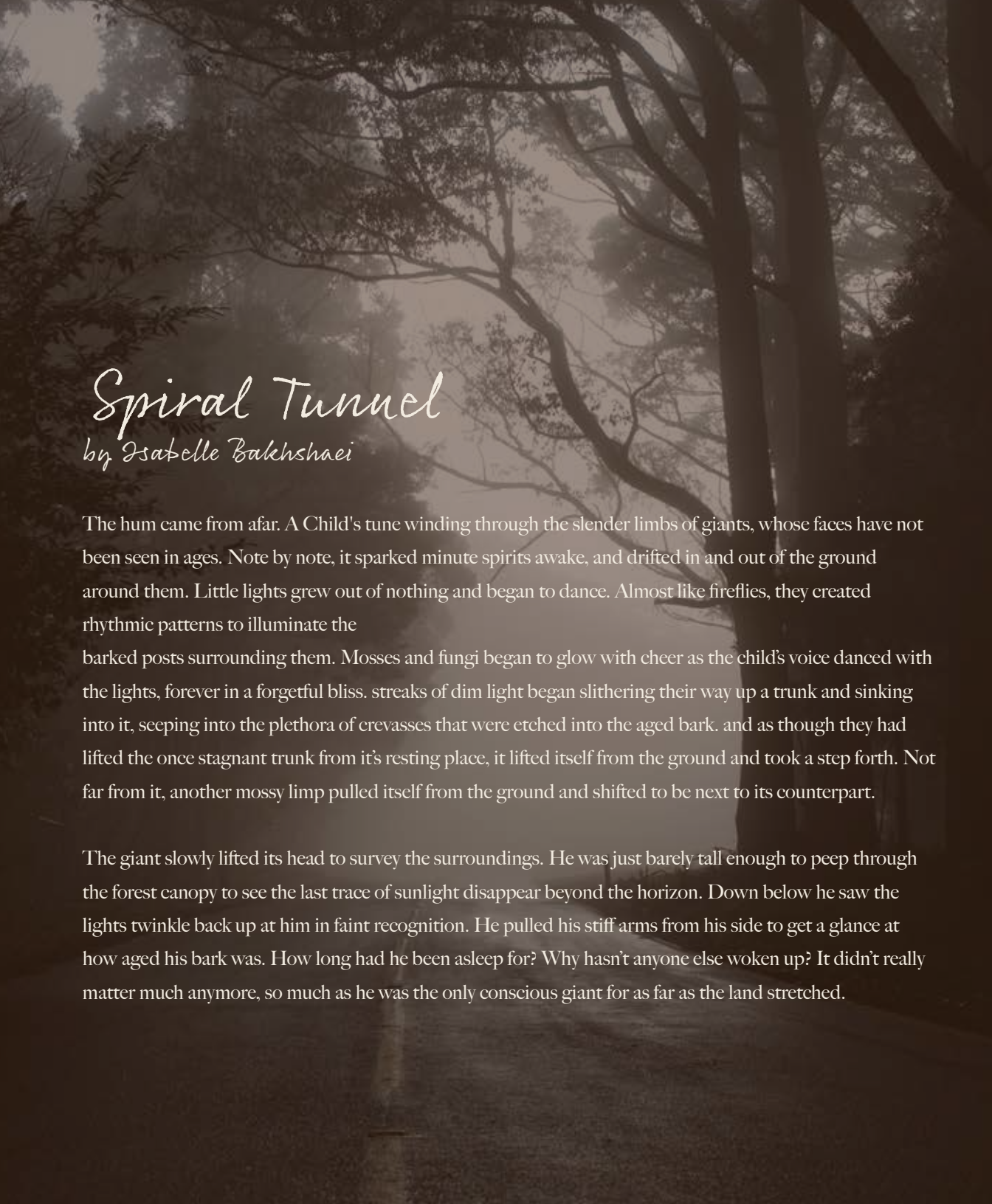
My name is Maya. I was not taught how to be weak. They think they can break me, but they forget, I am a woman. The strongest being on the planet. They can never weaken me. They can never weaken a woman. A woman fights back. And so will I.

Beautiful Bodies by Melanie L





by Riya Modh

A misty forest scene with tall trees and a path leading into the distance. The trees are dark and silhouetted against a lighter, hazy background. The path is a narrow dirt road that curves slightly to the right. The overall atmosphere is quiet and mysterious.

Spiral Tunnel

by Isabelle Bakshaei

The hum came from afar. A Child's tune winding through the slender limbs of giants, whose faces have not been seen in ages. Note by note, it sparked minute spirits awake, and drifted in and out of the ground around them. Little lights grew out of nothing and began to dance. Almost like fireflies, they created rhythmic patterns to illuminate the barked posts surrounding them. Mosses and fungi began to glow with cheer as the child's voice danced with the lights, forever in a forgetful bliss. streaks of dim light began slithering their way up a trunk and sinking into it, seeping into the plethora of crevasses that were etched into the aged bark. and as though they had lifted the once stagnant trunk from it's resting place, it lifted itself from the ground and took a step forth. Not far from it, another mossy limp pulled itself from the ground and shifted to be next to its counterpart.

The giant slowly lifted its head to survey the surroundings. He was just barely tall enough to peep through the forest canopy to see the last trace of sunlight disappear beyond the horizon. Down below he saw the lights twinkle back up at him in faint recognition. He pulled his stiff arms from his side to get a glance at how aged his bark was. How long had he been asleep for? Why hasn't anyone else woken up? It didn't really matter much anymore, so much as he was the only conscious giant for as far as the land stretched.



White Siren

by Isabelle Bakshaei

It stared right back. The pale siren I faced stood there across the moss, refusing to displace her attention on me. And gone, slithering away through the dirt. I was enchanted. My feet gained a sense of their own, and just as quickly began to sprint blindly for the teasing wisp somewhere in the distance.

I did not know where I was before, and had no hope of being somewhere I know, but the mossy limbs that strung from the ground took organic motions and slithered along a guided path. Drakes of vegetation seemed to swim by my side the faster I went after the one thing that could hold my fascination for so long.

It was only when I had reached a fae circle completely devoid of trees did I lose her. It was a peculiar thing, the fae circle; a ring a dozen meters in diameter imperfectly outlined by roots that inked into the circle. It seemed like plain grass at first, but the more I axled around to get a sense of my surroundings, the more I noticed the little things peeking through; the roots didn't fully seep into the ground, but piped up every once in a while, and with each bit of exposure, peculiar petals of white and pale yellow peeked out. And then every blade of grass seemed different, faintly glowing out of sync with its companions.

Identity by Kinzey Brosseau



Some of my Outfits by Jennifer Chen

SOME OF MY OUTFITS



The "living my best weird tomboyish nerdy life" outfit



The "I'm a pretty, elegant, and competent design professional, I could do this" outfit



The "I hate being a professional, everything aches" outfit



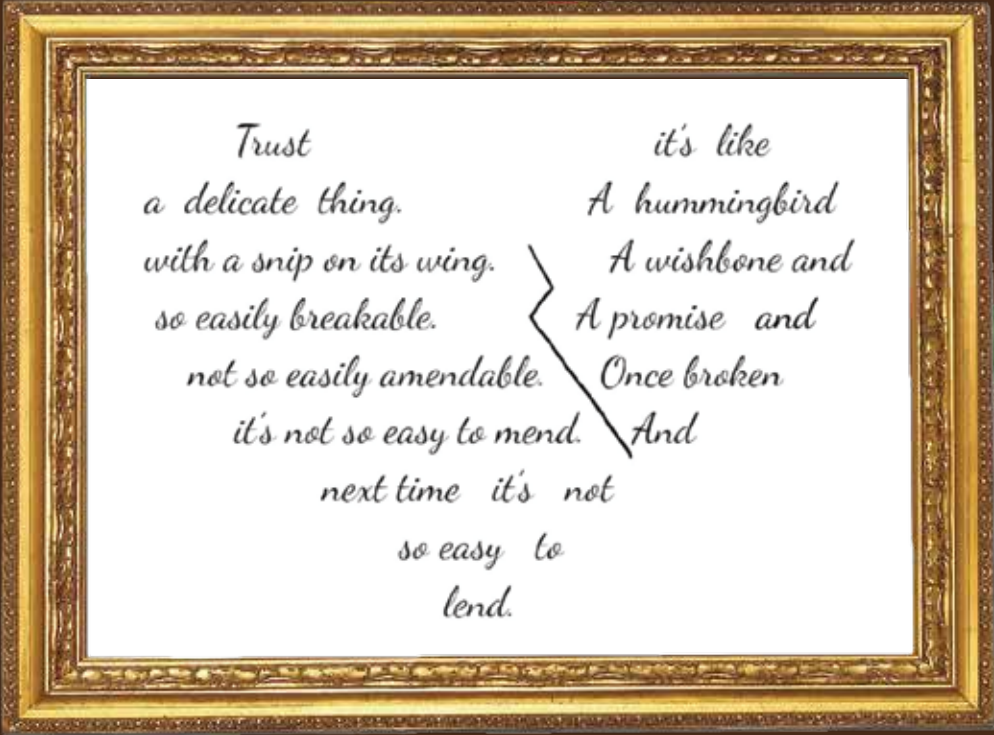
The "Wow I'm well put together... maybe TOO well. Does this make me materialistic?" outfit



The "Wow I'm such an awkward and unfashionable loser" outfit



The "BWAHAHA I'M A VULNERABLE, MORTAL, AND CHAOTIC SOUP OF EMOTIONS" outfit




Trust
a delicate thing.
with a snip on its wing.
so easily breakable.
not so easily amendable.
it's not so easy to mend.
next time it's not
so easy to
lend.

it's like
A hummingbird
A wishbone and
A promise and
Once broken
And

by Brenda Li

Therapeutics

by Brenda Li



Take the heart of a broken lass, swung around your pinky fast
Heal her heart with new-strung strings, place it on a shipyard's mast
Earthy tones of rain-fell soil, collect it all and waste your toil
Raging cries of men and boys, wrap their mouths in silver foil
An elder man with burning pains, douse him in the frigid lake
Place 'em in the cauldron good, chop him up for heaven's sake
Embers from a dragon's tongue, burn them to your sluggish feet
Ugly men and virgin girls, kill them both so none can meet
Take this spell and chant it well, use it when you need to quell
Insidious harms drawn up in arms — no emotions shall rebel
Cure your tears and all your fears: use it as your death draws near.

Peter's Adventure Home

(Excerpt 1) by Isabella McKenzie

Peter eyes spotted a poster in the shadows of his room that he hadn't seen before. He slowly got out of bed and walked closer to the poster. He continued to feel the warm breeze guide him. As he got closer, he squinted his eyes to try and make out the figures in the darkness.

"It's a poster of a jungle!" he said to himself, curiously.

There were some small figures scattered across the poster luring him to look closer. The warm breeze lifted his arm, as if he was weightless, to touch his fingers to the poster. As he touched it, the poster lit up. Peter's jaw dropped as glowing streams of golden sparkling light flowed from the poster and danced around the room. The glittering light lit up the room enough for him to see the new poster clearly.

The poster had a great, strong jungle with orange juice skies, cocoa bean dirt paths, and a raspberry lemonade ocean in the background. Flowers decorated the scene that smiled back at him, and small, red-topped mushroom people skipped along the paths. One mushroom stood in the foreground, and held their hand out to him, patiently hoping Peter would take it.

"Peter? What's going on in there?" said his mom on the other side of his bedroom door.

He quickly lifted his fingers from the poster and the golden light was sucked back in. Twinkling gold glitter was left sprinkled on the poster. Peter turned back to the mysterious image with longing eyes. He placed his hand back onto the poster, but this time his hand went right through. The poster rippled like a calm pond, and it felt like his hand was engulfed in mist. The streams of light began to flow from the poster again, and more and more as Peter's arm went deeper into the poster.

"Peter?!"

He turned his head to the door, then back to the poster, as he weighed his options as rationally as he could considering his forearm was immersed into a poster. He moved an inch closer to the poster and the golden light suddenly sped up. It whipped around the room and came up behind Peter. It shoved him chest first into the poster. The room went dark, and he was gone.

(Excerpt 2)

Suddenly, Peter heard singing. He looked around to realize the singing came from the five-foot-tall flowers that outlined the path. They were all different bright colours and textures. Their faces were cartoonish with big eyelashes and blushing cheeks. They turned to face him as he walked, like a sunflower to the sun. Their singing voices sounded like Disney princesses and their songs fluttered through the air. Peter reached out to delicately touch each flower as he walked. A giddy smile spread across his face as he touched each petal briefly. Some felt like leather, others felt like satin or suede. As he walked, his other senses explored the world around him. He felt butterflies of excitement in his stomach as he picked up the faint scent of honeysuckles. Then he heard birds chirping, glittering the air with their tweets. Warm gusts of wind encouraged him to move forward and the next thing he knew was walking through beige sand.



*Fortiter
in Re*

by Jagriti Tripathi

*Eit Saber
skull*

by Isabelle Bakhsaei





by Riya Modh



Signature Scent

by Sebrina Joergensen

when i say genderqueer i mean confusion.
for you, specifically.
fuck you for the fun of it, specifically.
but i always get so attached
to the armrests on a good reading chair
broken in by unknowable bodies
passed around
like bourbon
drank straight from the mouth because we're all
mannerless animals
and our mothers didn't raise us right
so there's no point in trying to be good.

genderqueer, i mean i
learned to take showers in the dark and
hide in crowds and choke myself
in winter with twelve foot scarves knitted
on my own slip stitch ribs,
sometimes scarves in the summer too
(thinner, I'm not an animal)
and now i think i like the feeling
of a gartered hand
around my throat
kinda queer



i mean i am a burning
bookstore kinda queer
body broiling on softwood cedar floors like salmon
pink flesh for you, i mean
leather-bound and spine-scarred, records scratched
in skin, i mean silkscreened
on your most hated shirt, i mean i get
restless
on city streets
as if it couldn't happen anywhere
but on cracked concrete with the confidence of a man
who thinks he knows better than beasts with
broken collarbones and wrought nerves
and a talent for baring teeth
and none of this is easy
none of this is fun
but I'll make it
leather and gin and blonde tobacco
boygirl beauty, a beast
with a glint in her eye
and a body never meant for the good
kinda queer



Room Flash



by Karen Su

Night Tree



by Karen Su

In the Distance

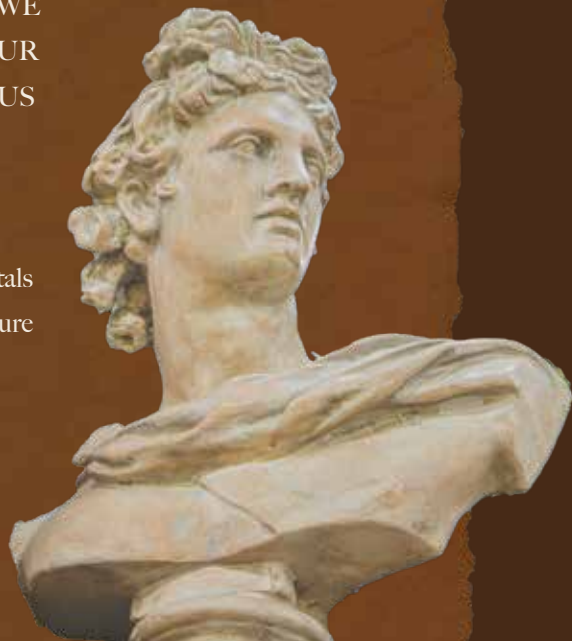
by Isabelle Bakshaei



I didn't dare look back, I simply couldn't. I couldn't do anything but take one step at a time going faster and faster and away from all of my fears. When the signal was finally given we all came to a slow stop by the river, that despite how slow the current always was, it never froze. It all looked too peaceful, the soft boulders of snow unaligned with the rest of the world. But the views could never last; the orange began to ink into my peripheral, haunting me till I just had to turn around, and there it was. Bright warm hues billowed into the sky, stark against the cold. The bright color peeked in stripes against the trees that had been left standing, the flames trying to consume what they could. Down by the water, just on the further side from us, stood the antediluvian elk - the very sun strung in its antlers. I cried out to it as it stared into my soul, attention undivided and cold - an observant spirit simply existing.

"WHY DID YOU DO THIS," I cried "SO MUCH WE LAID AT YOUR FEET. WE PRAYED, WE SLAUGHTERED, WE BEGGED. AND ALL FOR NAUGHT? WE GAVE OUR LIVES TO YOU, AND YET YOU TRAMPLE OVER US LIKE NOTHING EVER MATTERED!"

"And you thought it did? Foolish child..." A calm voice rung coldly through the woods, radiating from the creature "Mortals cannot command a god, let alone fathom its existence. Conjure whatever fantasy you wish, believe the dreams that comfort you, and tell the stories that enthrall your souls, but by no means, ever, assume that a god could be a kin to your kind."



The background is a dark, moody photograph of an interior space. A large, ornate gold mirror with a scalloped top and intricate scrollwork is the central focus. To its right, a smaller, similarly styled gold mirror is mounted on the wall. In the bottom right corner, a human skull is visible, resting on a surface. The lighting is low and dramatic, highlighting the metallic sheen of the mirrors and the texture of the skull.

untitled.

by Malia Rosales - Grant

the embarrassing noise of the alarm went off
another hopeless night to mourn
the hopeful spring to come...don't make me scoff
the dawn only leaves me scorn

my heart can only take so much pain
yet the Lord still challenges me so.
"eternal peace is yours to attain"
my peace and faith melted like snow.

you don't and never will see me the same
the two of you, my heart is between.
love is my kryptonite, my losing game
if only this life were to be serene.

tu qui casses mon coeur dans l'eau,
tu fais ma vie comme un "morceau."

The Gloomius Day by Brenda Li

'Tis a gloomius day with racshack clouds
The squawkety squacks are chattering loud
And rochety rats are rochiting grounds
Large droplets of glim have floppen around
And breatheen is thick with flovenly shtick

Oh gloomius day! Oh hoobahoolay!
My roofer is shmoot with squackity stay
My neater is seater – no, nay, such flay!
Drab droplets of glim have gloomid its rim
I hate this day!
Don't make it stay!
Make this hoobahoolay dissatoday!

My grampa came in to fixin my skin
He said,
Dear robber, don't fret your dream drobber
The squawkers may stay, but listen-to they!
Such smittering songs of miusfull glamour
The freshen and air is fresher thannaire
Your pupper has jupper and jubilee

And soon I realize,
Such gloomius day
Is indeed – a gloomius day
Not so hoobahoolay
And so I, the robber, with previous flay
Got out, went out, poppered outside to stay
And so, it goes:



'Twas a gloomius day with racshack clouds
The squawkety squacks were chattering loud
And rotechety rats were rochiting grounds
Large droplets of glim had floppen around
And breathen was thick with flovenly shtick

And it was a glorious day.

Withering Roses by Brenda Li

What beauty lies in rain of darkened day?
If sorrow blooms in chest's firm clenched fists
Then terrors steals the fragile harkened way
Heard louder bleats than reason's cry insists
Each tender day echos weaker than th'last
Reveals our wilt in frost with zero tithes
In melodies retrieved from summer's past
Not all forgotten growing in the piths
Grievances give way to nostalgic gifts
Replace the shallow pits and sallow wits
Our memories may haunt us in our rifts
Sabre souls and savour succulent twists
Even in the darkest hours will we find the myths
Sweet nothing more's which urge us to persist





A dead swan

by Isabelle Bakshaei

The frail woman gently brought her arms through the air
Moving an invisible curtain as she woke up
Bound to her chair by rustic age she listened to the sentimental melody
Reenacting the familiar gestures that transformed her
Her arms became wings
Elegant and white
A ghost reliving a past life
She embodied beauty itself
Wistfully swaying for heartache and a broken love
Crying out for the prince she loved to come back to her
She became a passionate storm of grief and pain
Letting her sorrow engulf and overcome her delicate body
Killing what was left of the alluring white swan

Accidental renaissance

by Isabelle Bakshaei

Pause
Just for a moment
And look
Notice
How the light falls
How the pigeon flies
Where a person's eye falls
The little things we do
The things that let us live
That let us be
Those that make us beyond apes
The things that make us human

Uncovering eyes
by Diya Drabu



Reflections

by Isabelle Bakshaei

Strangers came and went like the sun rose and set
The museum never truly devoid of several characters
Gazing into the countless stories the brush strokes told
Love and war and hatred was stirred awake
Frames handed reminders of pain and life
To each person who dreamt long enough
To each person who found their own reflection
And thought to themselves
Of the life they live
Of those they love or hate
Of what they mean in the world or to themselves
Or just the simplicity of being

Rage in tenderness
by Diya Drabu



Jennie from Blackpink
by Diya Drabu



Taeyong from NCT
by Diya Drabu

Venus Geitrix



by Isabelle Balchshaei

Venus de Milo



by Isabelle Balchshaei

untitled

by Tanmayi Jandhyala

At a sinister call of early snowflakes
I die but to remind you I once breathed your air
I cry but to tell you I have been on the ground for a while now
And that there's twigs around me
Scattered, once belonging in a nest.
Far away's the birds that perched on my hands
As gently as you held them,
As roughly as you drew circles on them
While the whirlpools in my chest dissolved the saltiness in my breath.



To love and to do nothing about it.
The more I love you, the less you want it.
To love and to do nothing about it, is like
The warmth of your hands, that I try to feel
In the pockets of my jacket.

It is like the tiny instance of time

Before I retreat a hug, when I think about you.
In the silence of midnight,
I envy the walls that can hear your voice.
In the silence of midnight,
I am the wolf that howls,
Yelps and yearns for distance.
Because, I think, distance inspires love.
Distance, is what makes the oceans soar.
Distance, is what crinkles my forehead.
Distance, is what requires aim.
Distance, is what lets you forget the longing you probably could see in me
And what tortures me into thinking about your crackling laughter
That slits right through me,
Punctures a hole in my chest, the size of the moon.
What would I know of the mysteries of the moon?
I am just a dusty ray of sunshine.
One that hopelessly wishes to land on your eyelashes
While you look at yourself in the mirror first thing in the morning.
While I love,
I hope I can do nothing more about it.



Blur World!

by *Salcha Ranjha*



If I squint, I'm at the playground in first grade.

Kids try tricks on the monkey bars, arms and faces contorted in confusion.

Others leap between rocks, teetering, barely escaping the fiery lava imagined to be bubbling and gurgling below their sneakers. They're safe as someone yells, "Grounders!"

Recess time is limited, but that doesn't stop anyone from drawing a neon-bright line of division.

The boys claim the rock-climbing wall on one side, while the girls return to the woodchip cake station on the other. They later agree to bear each others' cooties, to coordinate turns on the monkey bars.

The line-up is as follows: Boy Boy Girl. Girl Boy. Boy Boy Girl Girl Girl.

If I squint, I see Ibrahim, Boy 1, on the bars, trying a flip that almost costs him his arm. Then, Alexandra, Girl, completes an elaborate trick. We get halfway through before the bell rings.

During afternoon recess, it's my turn on the monkey bars. Stepping outside, the imaginary line of division is drawn again.

Squinting isn't enough to make the line disappear. Looking towards it is like looking at the sun without my Lilo & Stitch themed shades.

Sitting in my room, twelve years later, I squint my eyes.

If I squint, I can blur my reality and surrounding possessions into unintelligible blobs. I can pretend it didn't happen.



When we talked about what he did to me, I saw myself at the playground. This time, he was there, on the other side of the line. He was Boy 1. I was Girl, any one that followed him in line.

I asked him to try to understand me, to be a human and not a man, when I said:

Can I go home?

I need to go home

Maybe we should we stop

Can we stop now?

He was too far across the line to understand. So for support, I lean on the girls I make woodchip cakes with; play Grounders with; wait extra-long to try flips on the monkey bars with.

Some boys linger on the edges of the neon line, wanting to play all together. I yell at them to cross over, and they do. We make woodchip cakes, race on the rock-climbing wall, and play Grounders with glee.

They often look past the line, where the other boys fool around. It is there, with them, where the sweet boys who listened and sympathized ultimately return.

The woodchip cake girls give me so much love. But I wish the boys would knock down the inane line once and for all.

If they stopped caring about cooties, the sweet boys wouldn't struggle to play with us, to say and do the right thing.

I wouldn't squint to blur reality. I wouldn't need my Lilo & Stitch shades every time I swiveled my head towards the line. I wouldn't feel subdued, subordinated, subliminal, submerged within the lava.

It'd be nice to win a game of Grounders one day. With my eyes wide open and alert.





*by Ceanna Agnes
Aranha*



Samantha



by Sarah Rourke



The Valley

by Isabelle Bakshaei

Professor had mentioned many times over of a town that laid on a single path, one of which was tailored by its ghosts. The classically aged buildings that peppered the single trail ran thin with few residents, who spent the length of the hour tending to crops or humming a tune. The valley the town laid in was perpetually washed in a tastefully gray palette regardless of whatever season it may be, and on the queer day or so, a fog would come to tend to the land.

It would lay restfully there, a seemingly still haze utterly unbothered by the lost breeze. However, on the clear enough of a night, with a full enough moon, the odd pair of eyes could peek out back at you if you stared too long at a funny shadow. Oftentimes when everyone had gone to bed, the eyes would extend to some bubble of a head, and then a neck, followed by a misty torso set with a slender set of limbs. The gardeners, the townsfolk referred to them as, took care of the land that held few. Some of them had left fresh flowers or mosses by the feet of trees that they slumbered past, some had taken to molds and mushrooms, but all of them, oh how ever special they were, had painted the land with the ink of the night sky by the moon's filtered light. Thin fingerless palms would reach to the sky to pluck a star to mold it into a raven, with feathers black as night. Or scoop a puddle of the black abyss overhead to water the shrubbery.



A poet's love

By Isabelle Bakhsaei

We wish we can live a life that cannot be reached
We, in our nature, want to hurt, love, and hate
To feel our existence to our core
Experience every drop of rain that falls to the ground
Gaze at each star that ever existed
We are curious creatures that want to live

Idea 10

By Isabelle Bakhsaei


We waltzed through the rain
Perfectly in sync
Perfectly in the moment
As our bare feet tiptoed across the puddled tiles
Sweeping gently through our little lake
One step after another
As we fell in love all over again...



Clouds

By Isabelle Bakhsaei

Ever wanted to dance in the heavens?
So high up that nothing else ever mattered?
Nor ever will?



Keep Going

By Jessica Smith



keep writing things down. keep falling in love with the possibility of better things awaiting you. keep staring at the night sky imagining a world where you have made it through this storm. keep remembering that one day that day will come.

keep prying yourself off of the bathroom floor. keep wiping your tears and breathing in deeply. keep feeling your heart and knowing you are here for a reason.

a purpose.

a purpose more divine than your imagination can create.
keep holding on and letting go of the pain and sorrow.

the hurt.

keep inviting serenity into your life and make peace with the side of you still healing. keep yourself alive and own the space you hold.



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See you
next year!

*We are always
accepting submissions.*

To contribute to next year's issue, please
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Women's Centre.*

