

CULTURE

ESTD

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CORNER

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Christopher Tracey

Some Days

On some days I miss You

Your soft smile,

The way You gazed back at me-I'd stop and stare for a while.

On some days I don't

All of our pointless fights-the ones I could never win, because You were always right.

On some days I miss You,

Stuck in our lazy ways. You, me and no one else-In a cheap whiskey daze.

On some days I don't

Because it hurts to remember. How You promised me June but made me feel like December.

On some days I miss You

The feel of Your skin, the dimples on Your cheeks, and where Your back begins.

On some days I don't

But I'll never forget You. I still see Your soft smile, and I still adore the view.

Christopher Tracey is an up and coming writer from the fringe of Melbourne's inner Northern suburbs. This is his first publication

Marshall Gu

Who to call in case of emergency

We were flying down the highway. Ontario shield. Green trees. Blue sky. Red lights. Red fire? All the cars slowed down. We could hear shouting. The farm was on fire. It was in front of us. Beside us. Behind us. In the rearview mirror. Gone.

I hope everything is okay, you said.

It made me realize how I don't know anything. For example, I would not know what to do. I would call 911, yes. I would call the animals and herd them to safety, yes. The alpacas and cows would need to be calmed and moved away. I would call the insurance company, sure. But I would call my mother and ask her what to do, but even mothers don't know everything. They do not know what to do if you have a bed bug infestation. Throw out the dresser, but then what. They do not know what to do if you are diagnosed with some terrible illness. Make a plan, but then what. They do not know what to do if your farm is on fire if the house you built is ash if the dream you built is gone if you are tired and do not want to start over if the word 'rebuild' is not in your vocabulary, nor restart, nor revision, nor redo, nor remake.

Nothing to do except hope. Hope, hope, hope. *I hope so too.*

**Marshall Gu is from Toronto. he has had poems and short stories published in the Dalhousie Review, the Spadina Literary Review, Untethered Magazine, Cypress Press, the Junebug Journal and Clay Literary and is a regular contributor to the Tone Glow newsletter of experimental music.
Twitter: @freecitysounds**

Lucy Frost

Some Particulars

I rip and sway with buttons from the sea—
Articulation blinks my life away,
Sustaining bones that brim without my sound.
The shades of operation in my dress
Would bring me to the nines; I live alone.
I am the abstract of the streets I've crossed,
Forever in my numbers close behind
The thinking I get done. As sheets of air
Inspire pink phosphates in a nozzle's eye,
Construing pharmacies from halves of fruit—
As tonic songs resemble tangerines,
Their timbres teeming through the leaping buds—
So too can I invigorate my type,
Evolving concepts for the rose, abstracts
Of pinkness haloed in my sums of ice.

Lucy Frost is a transgender woman poet from Austin, Texas.

Priyanka Srivastava

Trick Me

Trick me
I tell to the moon.
Haunt me with that song
which poets hear during the midnight.

Patch up my heart with stars.
Trick me
so that I can be lost in the world of dreams,
save me before I become a memory

Priyanka Srivastava is a writer based in Singapore, her poems are often about her life in India and Singapore. When she is not lost in words, she loves to read especially non-fiction books. She also loves to play with colours.

Ariyo Ahmad

LAST CANDLES

In-between sounds and silence
I am the last prayer in a mother's' mouth.
Waiting to be echoed by an ark angel

I waited for this depressed night
To get drunk with darkness
And staggered into a last prayer.

My face is a waterfall
Of myriad and miracles
Of a cracked calabash

Each time I dreamt
It happens the next day
But I have a flickered memory.

I am a luminous light
That keeps swallowing darkness
Until a late-night farewell

A family of candles
Merriment visit them
But left as strokes of sadness.

A gunshot kissed a brother
And left a footprints of memory
With darkness as a gift

It wasn't God that blew out the candles.
Nor the winters wind
From the first to the last, it was man.

THE MEANING OF I LOVE YOU

Not the day I saw seven sun in your eyes at the bar.
And figured out your smiles amidst gory of darkness.
Or the way I was scavenging for Gold in your diastema
Our hands clenched together like twisted twig.

There is ocean of I love you dancing disco on the sky.
Like the way it is cumbersome to count
The congregation of stars in the sky
The way it's not possible to count.
The sedimentary stone around the surface of the earth
Or fetch ocean inside a basin.
Not even can a genius make the record into Guinness.

I love you is a long and interesting journey.
Not for one whose whole face is a punctured lie
Not one who went through bars
Looking for a sweet night in a pink lady
Not for one whose heart is solid like mortal
Not for one who takes every joke as insult
Not for one who can't love himself for what he has
Looking for love with what he does not have

Loyalty is the moon that guides along den of love.
During time misunderstanding crept in.
Trust is the pivot and light that send enemy to eternal jail.
Understanding locks lovers together; clustered cobweb.
For love takes time to sparkles and rekindle heart.

ARIYO AHMAD is a Nigerian poet who blends his thought into paper with his ever-flowing pen, whose inspiration is tapped from his beloved mother. His late father who has sojourn to the land of immortal, he graciously has his poem published in mixed magazine, madness muse, tea-light press, and forthcoming in words and whisper, nymphs' magazine to mention. Still, few, when he is not writing, he finds himself relinquishing on Khalil Gibran poems.

Madhurima Das

I Hate Liars

I placed my order. It was freezing outside. Within the glass doors of that tiny shop, it was lonely but warm. It was all I could manage on the eve of my 33rd birthday.

How had it come to be?

Years of honest hard work and that's what you get. Instead of a long-awaited promotion, a work trip to Japan as compensation. Why? Because I didn't like sucking up to others. I didn't know how to lie.

I wish I could lie gracefully like everyone else.

When I was a little girl, my father used to say that he loved me. Later, when he left Mom and me for another woman, I understood he'd lied.

One day in school, people started talking behind my back. I realised they'd come to know my secrets. The girl I had confided in, she was my bestie. She'd assured me that my secrets were safe with her. She'd lied as well.

As early as a 12-year-old, I knew if there was something I couldn't stand, it was being lied to.

In the spring of class 11th, I fell in love. The guy was older and working. It was the first and the strangest relationship of my life.

He lived and worked in Kolkata while my house was in the suburbs. We hardly ever met or went out. None of our friends knew about the relationship.

It was like we existed in each other's lives as thoughts exist in our minds, privy only to us. I wonder how something so weird survived for three years.

I used to be quite pissed. Other girls bunked school with their boyfriends while the only reminder of my boyfriend was the phone calls at night.

He used to share a lot with me. His thoughts, secrets, things he'd never told anyone. To him, he said, I wasn't just his girlfriend, but the best friend he never had.

While I always remained confused on what exactly I felt for him

Now that I've cruised by my 20s and been in several relationships, I realise now that he was special.

None of the men I dated sent me emails after breakup, as he did.

They were sporadic, those emails. Like happiness and sorrow, they didn't come at a fixed time but never failed to arrive. I felt very awkward at first, obviously. But I got used to it over time because he made it easy for me.

The emails were neither apology letters nor persuasions to go back. They were like letters to an old friend, warm and comforting.

He'd write about his life, his work and ask how I was doing. He never asked about my personal life.

Once, however, he did ask something that had me unsettled for days. It was around my 28th birthday. He asked if I still felt anything close to what I once used to feel for him. I wrote back, in the softest way possible, that I didn't. Of course, I couldn't lie to him or myself.

As the waitress arrived with ramen, my phone rang. It was an unknown number.

Does it really matter who it was? Or why was the waitress suddenly staring at me as if I was an alien? Or why was my phone shaking like crazy before I knew it wasn't the phone but my hands that were trembling?

All I remember is that it was a female voice and just one sentence out of all that she said.

He had passed away.

I was no longer present in that November evening of Sapporo, Japan. I'd wafted to that October evening in Kolkata, ages ago. The evening I broke up with him. It felt as if an old photo album burst through the roof crashing open in front of me. Before my eyes, were the images of that lost time.

It was a rare moment. We'd gone out. He was happy. I was anxious. But I'd made up my mind.

It wasn't that we both lived in different cities or countries. We were only an hour in local train apart. And yet, we hardly ever met. We barely made an effort.

It wasn't love. It was a lie, a convenience.

I burst out before him. He looked as if I'd slapped him. It was over, he knew it.

"You don't have to come with me to the station," I said.

"It's the last time..." Those were the only words he spoke that evening. As the train pulled away, he got smaller and farther.

That was the last I'd seen his face.

The waitress was gone but kept her anxious eyes on me. I wish I could cut open myself and show her the waves roaring within me.

Whatever showed on my face was only a drop of it.

A high school love I'd long left behind, why was his death making me feel like the loneliest person in the whole wide world?

He no longer existed in any corner anywhere. He wasn't going to write me any more emails. These realisations felt like a giant rock tied across my heart, sinking me to the bottom of the world's deepest ocean...

That evening of my 33rd birthday, inside a tiny food shop of a snow-clad city in Japan, I did it for the first time.

I stopped lying. I stopped lying to myself.

Madhurima Das is a CA student who lives in Kolkata. Her poems have been published on online platforms like Train_River_Publishing, globalagepoetry, pentupthoughts, and many more under the pen name, Maddy

Isioma Jemimah Okonicha

Anyway!

Yes it is only a matter of time before
the world see the bridge I will create.

They were meant to, anyway

I will look within me and draw strength

I need

I have to, anyway

I will dream and then create goals

I am supposed to, anyway

My dreams and visions I will work towards achieving

I am meant to, anyway

The untrue priorities that trade places with
the actual goals will be suppressed

They have to, anyway

The good and bad days that exchange
for a time will not define me

They were never meant to, anyway

The sideshows that come with errors
to block my sight will be removed

They surely will, anyway

The wrong people that carve negativities
will be pushed out

They will, anyway

Sudden fears and thoughts that disrupts
the vision I have will be blocked

They have to, anyway

My faults and my inadequacies will be corrected

I know they will, anyway

I will keep pushing for the prize

I have to, anyway

I will persevere, and I will succeed

I trust I will, anyway

I will rule, and I will definitely reign

I was born to, anyway.

Isioma Jemimah Okonicha is a creative writer of short stories, poetry, and essays. She is the founder and Editor of Dovelysi Lifestyle Magazine. Several of her books are published online and in prints.

BEAUTIFUL BUTTERFLY

So beautiful so gentle you live your life
To be the best version of yourself, you strive

Never giving up on your dreams
A beautiful soul a loving being has been your theme

Pushing yourself for those that you love
Shows all the strength and what you're made of

Like a butterfly through life, you soar
Loving and touching lives wherever you go

Loving embracing the journey you face
You accept life's challenges with strength and such grace

Instilling beauty, love, and compassion
You inspire as you live life with passion

Beautiful Butterfly go fly, fly, fly
For you, there is no limit, not even the sky

From where I stand I can see you above
My beauty, my little one my very own love

Dedicated to my daughter
my Beautiful Butterfly
The one without limits

Nancy E Campos

Beautiful Collection

BEAUTIFUL GYPSY

Oh beautiful soul, beautiful child
Don't ever change, stay true, stay wild

Let your essence always shine bright.
For those of us who get lost in the night

Speaking words of wisdom beyond your years
There to give advise, things we need to hear

Knowing that the truth you will always speak
Encouraging us when we feel lost and weak
You're free you get lost in the dance moving your feet
To your rhythm to the tune of your own beat

Never allowing your energy to stay in one place
You live, you thrive to fill, with light and joy any space

Beautiful Gypsy child of mine
I will love you till the end of time

Dedicated to my daughter my
Beautiful Gypsy

Nancy E Campos is an aspiring poet from the United States of America. Writing from Houston, Texas. Her works tell of life experiences, nature, beauty, love, pain, and the beauty of the imagination. She is open to helping many who come in contact with her work. As a builder and upcoming poet, she hopes to help those who have been broken find their voice and the beauty within. She writes both in Spanish and English she hopes her poems find the right hearts to inspire.

THE BEAUTIFUL MIND OF A POET

It's a love affair, with words, with beauty, with pain, with life
Everything is a beautiful thought, a poem, a potential line
It's captivating, but a lonely world for a poet
Our minds create Rhymed, Epics, Haiku, or Sonnet
It's a paradise so sublime we get lost in time
We get pensive as we search for words that rhyme
Our minds are simple, yet so complex
Strange that a word can leave us so perplexed
A rose, a tear, or a word can trigger our emotions
In 2.5 seconds it becomes a whole production
We live, we feel every word with passion
Never ask a poet for a simple explanation
We see words with clarity in a whole new light
What we feel, what we see we begin to write
We travel into and through the words as we become one
We can go into detail until the rising of the sun
As our imagination starts, it is followed by emotions
To our art, we are dedicated in heart and full devotion
Our essence, a piece of our soul, is in each, and every word
We make poems of pain, tragedy, hope, and eternal love
We can dream, and write of a perfect world
But ours is the saddest story you would have heard
We get lost in words, the dreams, the beauty in between
As we ponder our feeling, we live to write what we've seen
We love to see their smiles, the validation, this is how we live
But the sadness and our loneliness is never quite perceived
As the moments turn into hours of you of writing and creating magic
In this world we feel forgotten, it's somewhat tragic

BEAUTIFUL DREAMER

As I watch the moonlight dance on your face
My heart is filled with love, you take my breath away

The rhythm of your chest as you breathe the evening air
I love the way the light softly touches your hair

I'm mesmerised by your beauty in the evening glow
I feel you, I honour you as my tears begin to flow

You are the one, your essence completes me
It was spoken, it was written, it was our destiny

Our souls agreed to stand the test of time
I would be yours, and you would be mine

The lessons we knew we had to learn
Together we'd master when we returned

Here you are as beautiful as I remember
When I first laid eyes on you that blissful day in September

As I looked into your eyes, I was finally home
The universe brought us together. I'd found my soul

Manasi Diwakar

My Phone Understands Me

The moment I think about
buying a bra,
it pops up everywhere
on my phone- this app, that app, all apps.
 I wonder why love doesn't work this way,
 I think about it all the time,
 I want it all the time,
 from this man, that man, that *particular* man

the phone then tells me to buy
matching underwear,
but I already have too many black ones.
 I wonder why then love doesn't
 start showing suggestions of commitment,
 of fences, of flowers and rain. Of fall.
 I have none.

then I buy a bra, and
the fancy black *lingerie*
 (which sounds funnily different
 than its spelling,
 but is so convincingly
 appealing),

now I am thinking of wild nights
in black under-things with *the* man,
and my phone instructs me
on *fifty ways to make a man fall for you*

My phone understands me.

Possibilities

The thing about horizons is,
they remind me of a carrot
that never reaches
a reaching hand sitting
at the shores of hope

all we can do is sigh
for that one day
and smile at the little
arcane reality sitting beside us
where our world is centered

and while we stare at the face
of reality,
a plunge from a precipice sends
us into thinking of
the plunges that might not have
water as the trampoline

it convinces us of mooring
in the dreams lining our lashes *until*
adrenaline acts as hope
holding risk in its hands as gently
as a butterfly

But I have a phobia for butterflies.
I really do.

Manasi Diwakar is a writer and a sucker for love stories. She writes poems, short stories, non-fiction. You can find some of her work here <https://medium.com/@manasi.diwakar> and here <http://myintuitivemind.blogspot.com/>. She is featured as a top writer in Poetry on Medium. Her poems have appeared in various online literary journals and anthologies such as- Literary Impulse, Wingless Dreamer, The Rainbow poems, Blognostics, Impspired, Polyglot Poetry, Catharsis, etc.

In the darkness, every field, every sky
appear the same: stars throbbing—rudderless.
Colour bulbs twirling a fishing rod on the fly
towards the navy pier in Chicago. Feckless.
And me trailing behind. Past resident-alien.
Present de-wheeled speedwagon.
Hurling against the gradient. Nothingness.

In the field in front of the red house
where stars bristle and dancing rockets go bust.
In a village something like Nischintapur (*you think*),
inky rivers slice the land. And sickle-shaped moons smile.
Then silvered hair men sing.
And stars appear before you and me.
Falling to the ground.

Then resident alien, now de-stringed kite
thinks of home and the thin ply walls
that pass as home, and mirrors within mirrors;
and the tiny perforated sheets
clamped over resident alien-human cacti.
When the space between strange words creates an opening:
Crowded starlight opening outside to a blank.

Stargazing

Then I circle back to the frame within frames
and the field in front of my house
where stars weep rivers of boxed wine
into long-stemmed dollar tree glasses.
When Compliers, Dissidents, and the spaces between you, me and
them
collapse into a playing field: a circle within circles
around a campfire with melty smores on a wintry evening.

But Meera and the twelve-year-old boy
from the iron station far away are outliers,
never belonging— forever suspended
in geometries that never intersects our circles.
Stars don't shine the same way for them,
and even in darkness,
the fields in front of their houses don't look the same.

Amrita De

But you tell me, in darkness every field
every night sky seems the same.
And the space between you and me
are mostly a non-space postmodernist
would peg to the perforated surface screen.
You think the screen is only there to mask the scream
for when the sickle-shaped moon smiles into trash-bins

But I know the trash bin of my metaphorical frame
Is really a furnished duplex redux from my apartment in Kolkata,
where every morning the twelve-year-old
from the ironing station at the end of the field
leave three packets of pasteurized milk and newspaper at the door.
Afterwards, Meera in her tightly wrapped floral sari discards the trash
while I spread myself on the sofa: beached whale soaking in the sun.

I think of my present garbage existence
in my matchbox room in a shared two-bedroom in Chicago.
I think of other resident aliens who look like you and me.
Some tweeting endorsement of fascist politics back home.
I think about the pity parties they host every Friday night
to lament their trash can resident alien status while playing
beer pong and blasting Bollywood songs on Apple loudspeakers.

On average days, on medium days,
not a fraction more, not a fraction less
when stars are dead, and nothing is ablaze
only salads with tuna and watercress.

I think of you and call you names,
lover boy, the lover girl, love it all, Love stands tall.
A lyric, a ballad, or even a story, all is fair game
for I Can't help falling in love with you.

In Love

The woman next door looks at me askance,
when I say I am in love with you.
Crazy salad lady she thinks, waiting for a chance,
but I look at you and think what a view.

Amy says it's all in my head, Love is not real.
But it is, it is, as real as this breeze that makes me sway.
If it was, she says, I would eat Love in place of a meal.
Or mould it into something else, like freshly formed clay.

On good days, on excellent days,
when I am on fire, but the world isn't burning.
And stuff is crazy, but I still get a raise
I see you and feel something in me churning.

On bad days, on terrible below average days,
when I am in bed, and my world is dead.
You remind me it is only a phase
and even though everything is heavy as lead,
I can't help falling in love with you.

Mr Therapist with the quilted beret says you are an idea,
something for the back burner, never landing, always in flight.
The wind beneath my wings: a fabricated panacea.
When in darkness, you provide me with light.

I feel you in the darkness and festering daylight when I am awake;
in the poetry I read, in the cinema I watch, in the doodles I scribble.
I think you are called Art, but Angela thinks you are well-done steak.
What's with these definitions, but I am not one to quibble.

I just look at you and think what a view
for I can't help falling in love with you.

Amrita is currently writing a PhD dissertation on heteronormative Indian Masculinities with the Department of Comparative Literature at SUNY Binghamton. Alongside finishing a dissertation, they're also currently at work on developing my first novel. Their works have appeared in Aaduna, Café Dissensus, Muse India, Cerebrations, Kitaab and is currently forthcoming in other literary magazines

Zach Murphy

Rose Knows

Every autumn day Rose passes by the hot air balloon field in Stillwater, wishing she had enough money in order to go up for just one ride.

Last winter had not just taken a toll on Rose, it took nearly everything she had left. Now, she has a frostbitten toe and a frostbitten heart.

Rose knows that even the happiest golden leaves grow weary when they catch the first gust of winter's harsh might. Rose knows that if the sun ever decides to go away for good she'll try to make it promise to come back. Rose knows that if she would have had her life together, her adopted boy Frankie would still talk to her.

Across the air balloon field, sits a pawn shop. A pawn shop is a depressing place when you've got nothing to pawn, nothing to sell, and not enough means to buy anything. A job application turns into a hopeless slate the moment you see "Three years of experience needed."

After staring at her weathered reflection in the pawn shop window, Rose turns around toward the field and observes an unattended hot air balloon. She crosses through the dewy green grass, looks around, and decides to hop into the balloon's gondola.

The balloon is much bigger than Rose thought it would be. Her eyes widen as she gazes up at the balloon's bright rainbow colors. Suddenly, a pair of balloon tour guides run toward her, yelling "Stop!"

Rose quickly unravels the ropes from the ground, boosts the propane flame, and takes off into the sky. From this view, the falling leaves look like fluttering butterflies. Rose knows that when she comes down she'll be in a lot of trouble. So she squints up at the sun and gives the balloon some more power.

Zach Murphy is a Hawaii-born writer with a background in cinema. His stories appear in *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Mystery Tribune*, *The Coachella Review*, *Ginosko Literary Journal*, *Yellow Medicine Review*, *Spelk*, *Levitate*, *Ellipsis Zine*, *Ghost City Review*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, and *Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine*. He lives with his wonderful wife Kelly in St. Paul, Minnesota

Christy Chris

We Are The Children of Hope

We are the children of hope
Smear'd with the oil of dismay
And our neck, laden with the jewelry of death

We are children of hope
Speaking from the place of pain
And an address of anguish

We are children of hope
Chewing anxiously on the cane of change
Wondering on how much have changed.

Our throat tickles with the acrid thin juice of lies
Served with a cold slice of deceit
On the ancient table of delay.

We sit in the cold forgotten fire place
With confused faces
Wondering how our trust became our loss

We have been struck down but not destroyed
We have been muffled but not extinguished
We have been smitten but not vanquished
We rise
From the ashes of humiliation
With hands lifted in victory
And we choose to rebuild
For we are the children of hope

Christy Chris is a young Nigerian poet and most of her works are deep expressions of the prevalent situation in her country and of life and the world at large. Her works depicts an unflinching and undaunting hope for change and growth.

She hopes to touch and influence lives by her writings.

Christ Chris was the winner of the Okigbo poetry competition (2014) and the winner of 'Scribble the future' (2016). She was also shortlisted as one of the 100 best young African poets in 2018.

Her works are documented in her blog:abvnormal.wordpress.com

**Big thank you to all the contributors that submitted their work and a massive thanks to this fantastic community for allowing this to happen.
Each issue wouldn't be possible without you!**

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owner of the land we operate from and pay our respect to elders past, present and to come.

Peace and love to everyone

!!!!Big things to come in 2021!!!!

-Steve