



Ice Lolly Review

Issue III 2020

Editors' Note

First off we would like to thank you guys for all the support and love. This magazine has grown so much with over 80 submissions from thirteen different states and ten different countries in such a short span of time. This is all thanks to our followers, readers, and contributors. We never dreamed we would make it so far. Thank you so much. It is a privilege to display such beautiful pieces.

We were also pleasantly surprised at the amount of depth submissions showed. We received pieces that were complex with an intricate style and voice to pieces that focused on highlighting the simplicity of life. All submissions, whether accepted or not, were unique in their own way. That diversity is what makes writing beautiful.

We would also like to thank our contributors for having the courage to submit to us and put their work out there. That takes guts. A piece of writing is like a piece of a person and it takes bravery to share themselves with the world.

Now, we would like to present works that displayed a true voice and a strong style, works that were sweet, sour, and bubble-gum flavoured, works that stuck to our teeth and left our tongues painted red and pink, aching for more. We present to you THE ICE LOLLY REVIEW ISSUE 3.

- The Editors of Ice Lolly Review.

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An aesthetic art piece - Poem
By Siya

What an aesthetic art piece she is!
Looking at her, fills you with bliss
The freckles on her face,
formed constellations when traced.
From orion to lyra to capricorn,
she looked beautiful in all forms
The stretch marks on her thighs
were the high and low tides
Those chalky white waves
enhanced her grace.
Cellulite on her belly
was showing her happy soul as a jelly
The acne on her cheeks
were the peaks she reached
Those red dots told
that she can be dangerous when poked
The wrinkles near her eyes
were the stacked dreams she had, to fly
The ridges in her skin were the battles she fought and win

Siya is a simple girl who hails from a beautiful country India. Her diary, her pen and her moon are her best friends. She believes in carpediem.



The Cold, Dark, Corner - Poem
By Harshita kaushal

The corner in my room is cold and dark
It haunts me at night,
Speaks to me while,
I lay on my bed petrified and blue.
It gets into my head,
And give me nightmares.
My body is numb,
Hands shivering,
It manipulates me,
Pull me down to the empty.
Feeds on my soul.
Talks about my insecurities,
No redemption for my psyche.
Makes me feel me worthless and
Every time it gets to me,
It leaves a scar on me.
The corner in my room,
Speaks to me.

Harshita Kaushal was born in New Delhi and is currently studying in 12th grade. She is 17 years old. She is a published writer and other than being an exemplary student she also devotes much of her time to her strongest passion, writing, which is an integral part of her life. She hopes to touch the souls of the youth out there with her words.



THE FAKE WORLD - Poem

By Prachi

This world is fake
People are temporary
The one who promised to stay forever
Have now become a memory

The ones whom we trusted the most
Are now somewhere Lost
I stood up with everyone in their bad times
But now I guess that was my crime

I was there when people were in pain
Maybe because I used my HEART instead of BRAIN
I was left alone
Lost in the world of my own thoughts.

Take me away from this world of lies
To the place where love never dies
People nowadays don't care if you are behind or ahead
They don't care if you are alive or dead

Fake people all around the world
Be wise enough to identify one
They will walk away

When you ask them to stay

A worst situation will show you who was there
And who truly care
Fake faces will be revealed
But this was something my heart didn't believe

Fake people will not show you real care
Just be aware!
The ones standing with you when you are in need
Are your real friends indeed

Nobody in this world is real except your family
They are the one standing by you happily
Their love can never be fake
They can do anything for your sake

Prachi is a 17 year old girl who lives in Panipat. She loves to write and she finds her happiness and peace in writing



A small pond - Poem

By LuLu Kimmel-Miner

On the surface of a small pond
lily pads grow, adorned with pink petals.

A tangle of reeds are strewn on the sandy shore,
half submerged in water.

If you look closer you will find
small frogs along the edge

like tiny heartbeats
amongst water painted stones.

Insects flit and glide
tadpoles wriggle just underneath.

If you lie submerged in water,
be patient.

Let life seep into your bones.

LuLu Kimmel-Miner is a junior living on the West Coast. She enjoys writing, reading, and baking, as well as drinking hot chocolate while it rains. She is also an editor for the Junebug Journal, and has a couple pieces forthcoming in other magazines. Her favorite authors include Sappho, Emily Dickinson, and Robert Frost. Her instagram is [luluwrites111](#) and she has a personal blog at [luluwrites.live](#).



Such a thing - Poem
By Marisa Oishi

“there’s no such thing as healthy negativity” and i want to reply that the reciprocal isn’t true, ‘cause the thing is, there is such a thing as toxic positivity - it resides in that side of the battery with which you close the circuit and charge the world.

“i’m gonna change the world” we all grow up saying, but growing up means falling down and landing on the cold, hard truth - it hurts, and when the truth is hard, it’s easy to lie

“stop” i beg of you, on my metaphorical knees, the formation of these upside-down thoughts on your tongue - and then maybe we can all melt a little, and I can stand up with these creaking joints, and then maybe we’ll be both healthy and positive. imagine such a thing.

Marisa Oishi is a 14-year-old writer from Washington state. She is a ballet dancer and loves reading and crossword puzzles. She frequently publishes her work on Write the World.

He belonged to me!

By Sanchi

The night was just mine
it belonged to me and him
sitting on the car's roof
wrapped in his arms
at midnight,
under a million stars.
only that time
we were under same sky
He was mine and I was his.
Gazing the stars and
making love under moonlight
That night he belonged to me
His lips pressed mine as
the shooting star struck
Tracing the orion and
looking for the north star
We were one, just once
under the night sky
He was the sky and
I was the earth...
inseparable yet
separated by infinity
That night he belonged to me!



Sanchi is a 17 year old that hails from Haryana, India. Her patronus is a unicorn and she is a universe believer. She loves to talk about fireflies, stars and books. She loves the croissant crescent and the idea of it being full. She is a procrastinator who finds solace in writing.



Mimeomia - Poem

By Riya Dey

Mimeomia (n): the frustration of knowing how easily you fit into a stereotype, even if you never intended to, even if it's unfair, even if everyone else feels the same way—each of us trick-or-treating for money and respect and attention, wearing a safe and predictable costume because we're tired of answering the question, "What are you supposed to be?"

It is weird isn't it
That all these girls
In their dainty dresses
And heads drugged
With the nicotine
Carrying love
Giggle and tease each other
How that guy was looking
So longingly at one of them
One even starts building
Castles in the air
About this guy she met
At the newly opened café
No it isn't anguishing
That they talk of guys
No, not at all.
It is a matter of anguish
That they talk only
Of guys

Cause if you notice
One of them is very quiet
And is looking at another girl
A stranger, sitting opposite to them,
With unspoken longing.
That young man
In his office cubicle,
Smiles politely
At his colleague talking about
The lady he is getting engaged to
But looking at the side cubicle he sighs
The man he loves, he shall never be able
To marry.
Hence i wonder
If it's written somewhere
In the papery constitutions
Of our pasts
That love is a potion
Locked in bottles
Labeled, to be drunk by males
And the after effects include
Falling blind for girls
And does this go
Vice versa, for the
Ladies out there too?
This question settles
Deep inside somewhere
In my heart, like an itch uncured
And this, demands an answer.

This poem was written by Riya Dey, who is currently graduating in History, from the University of Delhi, India. Residing in Kolkata, India, she is mostly found reading novels and fulfilling her appetite through sweet eatables and watching k-drama.



Onism - Poem

By Sarah Chaudhry

She sits on the wooden bed that's held her small frame for countless days and nights,
As she dries her tears while staring into the mirror
With a soul that's been tested too many times by the Almighty in the heavens above
wishing that she could be something more than just herself
And find the light shrouded in the darkness.

Sarah Chaudhry is a fifteen-year-old sophomore in Queens, New York. She enjoys reading and writing more than anything in the world, aside from watching Marvel movies and coming up with ideas for short stories and poetry. Sarah has work published on Cathartic Literary Magazine and Ice Lolly Magazine as well as aspires to publish a novel (or two!) of her own. You can also find her on her only social media @sarah._.barahh on Instagram.



who is a woman? - Poem

By Kshitija Aherkar

to begin with-
she is your morning coffee,
whose beans are
perfectly picked, processed
ground and brewed to make your morning.

she is that elevator,
on a hot afternoon
who makes you reach peaks,
high-rises and skyscrapers.

she is that last bite of
sugar cream pie-
which is sweet enough to
ease the hunger.

she is a mirror
who shows you the truth
discovering new expressions,
she helps nurturing the youth.

she is a river
blizzard yet steady, reminding
to go ahead always.

she is air,
feels fulfilling.
provides our very breath.
our very existence.

she is a promise
to be kept for
never to break,
obligated yet adore.

she is the sun,
who bestows light.

she is a knife
who has jointly
seen more wounds.
who, herself is covered with
sutures.
but is still though.

she is a lioness
who'll fight for her right.
untamed fearless.

she is that mountain,
big enough to reach for
but knows the clam and quiet.

she is the moon,
carved and shined
even at the darkest.

she is the sky
limitless,yet bounded.
reaching for her is exacting.

Until you seek for horizons.

she is power, never seen before.
she does mundane chores,
she looks after her babe,
she cooks delightful,
she paints beautiful,
she narrates stories,
she writes poetries,
she sings symphonies,
she works as an entrepreneur,
she is all on her own...
she is skin, she is bone.
she is veins; blood.
she is tears, she is sweat.
she faces struggles.
she's everything unlike other.

she is but a question and an exclamation.
and the journey between the two.

she is everything.
she is me.
she is you.

Kshitija (She/Her), 18, is a student and a budding writer from Mumbai, India. Her work portrays the kaleidoscope of mental health, identity, magic, visions, critiques, nature and timelines. She loves talking and finds meaning by narrating stories, being a spoken poet. In her spare time, she enjoys Ukulele, calligraphy and paper work.



crumbling faith - Poem
By Aadit Pahuja

i.

stark white marble walls
stare back at me blankly-
the paint's peeling off
and is crumbling down
(it settles in the corners).
the air smells of faith.
beads of sweat line my forehead
(i wipe them away with the back of my hand)
and happy tears line
my mother's dark eyelashes.
(she doesn't wipe them away)
a group of lonely kids (choir, matthew, kaw-yer)
stumble on the stage and clear their throats-
my mother clutches the silver cross
hanging around her neck with
her sweaty, chubby fingers
and stands up (in respect, matthew, in respect)
and i follow-
(i don't have a cross, so i dig my nails in my sweaty palms instead)
the children sing in their singing voices
and i mumble the gospel truth with them.
i see sideways and there He is-
his tall, gorgeous body well-oiled,
bathed in ambrosia-
Jesus

and He smiles at me-
a gentle smile; i smile back.

and then He vanishes.

the truth ends

(amen, amen)

and i loosen the tie

around my neck.

i turn to walk out and

mother says-

'there's God in the air, matthew'

and so i inhale Him

(deep breaths, deep breaths, inhale the truth)

like cigarette smoke.

there's God in the air.

ii.

everything's a

happy blur- (not really)

pieces of colourful paper

dissolve under my tongue and melt into my saliva

like gold.

i'm falling

and i can't even feel it- (maybe i can, i'm not sure)

i prick myself with disposable syringes

and ancient humiliations.

there's something at the back of my head,

it's plunging me into the dark (no no no i don't want to go)

and there's a tiny stage

with tiny kids (choir, matthew, kaw-yer)

but-

swoosh

i'm back,

i see spots spots spots (redgreenblue)

like the polka dots on

my mother's blue dress i loved-

no no no i don't wanna go back (i go anyway)

swoosh

and i see grass-

plush (it is spring in the meadow)
and there's my mother in her blue polka dots dress (the one i loved)
sitting on a picnic mat with packets of bread and-
(matthew, here's your sandwich)
and i'm running running running
to her and then the taste of tomatoes explodes in my mouth
and
swoosh
i'm back
but the tomatoes didn't
they stayed with my beautiful mother
in the spring-hit meadow
and left me the taste of redblack blood.
(or was it tomatoes? i'm not sure)
i feel tears trickle down my cheek
trickle trickle trickle
i close my eyes and pray (what else can i do?)
the truth ends (amen, amen)
and i inhale
(there's God in the air, matthew)
Him like cigarette smoke but all i smell is
sickly liquids in plastic bottles-
(is there God in the air, mother? if He is, why doesn't he help me, mother?)
i see sideways and there He is-
He sees me with drooping eyelids-
dark holes beneath His eyes,
and rotting skin-
Jesus-shaped monstrosity
smoking joints with me
He looks at me-
with a resigned glumness; i glumly look back.
and then he vanishes.
and then i'm standing up (or am i? i'm not sure; i'm trying atleast)
but i can't.
and i fall back.

there might be God in the air.

iii.

ice cold ice cold water hits my neck
and the hair on my neck stands up (in respect, matthew, in respect)
and i'm drowning drowning drowning
in my own head and
i hold the bathroom door for support
(but i've already fallen).
and my head is
spinning spinning spinning
i look at the holes on my arm
(where injections have punctured me)
and there's a memory in my stomach
and i puke it out along with the vomit.
the lights flicker (or do they?)
and i fall down face-up face-up
and something bursts in my head.
i feel warm blood
creeping down my neck
but i can't do anything about it
(or can i? no you most certainly can not, matthew)
ice cold ice cold water mixes with
warm sicksweet blood
and i see myself die
from above.
i see sideways and there he is-
in all his trivial glory-
matthew.
i smile at him a sad smile.
he smiles a sad smile back. gently. intimately.

there is no god in the air.
only my crumbling faith.

Aadit is a fifteen year-old living in Delhi, India. He has previously written for school magazines and some literary magazines. His poetry is related to topics which drift away from the normal and explores topics like human trafficking and religious beliefs. He spends most of his time thinking about writing, and when he starts writing, he ends up doing something else. Other hobbies include killing time on YouTube and Netflix. He is also a strong supporter of minority groups and the LGBTQ+ community.



A Woman - Poem
By Roy

I've got the body of a woman,
That I can't be the girl, inferior to a man's whip.
It's me who can't make a pretty face,
And open my mouth for sweet talks.
I have my weapons which your mind says " make up" ,
That I can laugh a lifetime with tears down my cheeks.
It's all the bad breath you'll get out of my mouth;
Cause there's a lot of poison that I imbibed.
I have got a heart that beats; No matter how many times you stab it.
God, got me in the rotten hands of a man ;
Who's anything but not a lover.
And it's my fate which happens to play,
With the devil, to bring the soul of mine to the jaws of death.
I've got my feet above the earth,
That it's all in vain to pull the rock beneath my feet.

I've got my hands full of thorns;
And yes I am the pretty rose you desire thoughtlessly.
While you smile at the rain,
I feel I'm cursed by the heavenly powers;
So you call me the storm or a thorn,
But it's me a woman;
Whom you'll find hard to embrace.

Roy is from India and is 18 years old. Roy aspires to become a writer someday and currently writes under the pen name ROY (Instagram id : roypamphleteer/roywritings7). Roy indulges herself mostly in painting and writing. Roy finds solace in diary writing, reading and listening to music and regards music and observations to be the main source of the topics of her writings. She likes to write and compose works mostly in free verses and is trying to excel in the respective.



October - Poem
By Trini Rogando

when you
were younger, you
would wield safety blankets
like shields and flashlights like flame
you would
 evade demons bouncing off car doors and
 wrap yourself in the verdant laughter of life
long before you knew it had a name.

you are older now, and downcast demons chew
through the fabric of time - age has supped
the fear from your soul; yet, on some
lonely october nights, you cling to
the dark: the haunting cusp of
youth. you wrap yourself in
white sheets and laugh in
a pained, indulgent
whisper, of an
almost-dream
you know
only to call
a ghost.

Trini Rogando is a sixteen-year-old currently attending TJHSST in Alexandria, Virginia. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in Kalopsia Lit, Second Revolution, the Interstellar Review, and others, and was recently named a National Winner of the National High School Poetry Contest. She wants to remind everyone to not take life too seriously; no one ever gets out alive.



Overdrive - Poem
By Stella Lei

You are plastic stitched into skin
patchwork shopping bags
refracting under fluorescents

“Have a Nice Day” branded
on hands on chest

Stretch and you rip it
Burn and crimp it

Nitroglycerine-bubbled nerve endings
make pyrotechnics show of synapses
receptors overloaded

Try to keep up
you can't keep up—

Bury fireworks in the pulp of your teeth
blowing bone to shrapnel

Light a gas fire
See what happens

Steel wool-fuzzed skull
metal sparking metal
scraping like gravel into palm lines
scrubs you clean

I need to be
clean.

Stella Lei is a sixteen-year old writer who has been nationally recognized by the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Her work has previously appeared in Cathartic Literary Magazine and FEED. She lives in Pennsylvania with her two cats.



Midnight Dancing - Prose

By SaraJane Devereaux

The feeling is sensational. It's the type of feeling you only get from dancing at midnight. But not just dancing at midnight, dancing to Bruno Mars at midnight. You're flipping your hair while the heavy beats of "Locked out of Heaven" play in the background of the dimly lit room. Your bright blue eyes flicker from the stars and your curls slowly unravel from moving around so much. Your feet are aching and your toes want to be released from your tight hightops that they've been concealed in all night. But nothing could stop this moment that you're experiencing. Nothing can stop you from moving around and becoming what you want to be. And then you wake up.

SaraJane Devereaux is a fifteen-year-old aspiring writer from the "fabulous" Las Vegas, Nevada. SaraJane spends most of her time reading fantasy novels and soaking up fall weather. SaraJane plans to write a few books in her time while on the earth and hopes that one day she'll be able to be called a "New York Times Bestselling Author."



childhood vignettes - Prose

By Anoushka Kumar

you are proud of your country, and of her rich heritage. and you shall try, desperately try, to be worthy of her. you open your eyes wide, waiting in line at a school quadrangle, it is yet another morning assembly among your fellow restless comrades eager to escape to lands outside of the tiny home they have grown up in. you yearn together, as you wipe the glistening sweat from your dusky foreheads, stuffy tunics amplifying the effect of the sun's heat emanating from the azure sky as crows erupt in a cacophony of voices. the hymn is disrupted, but the choir undeterred-their scarlet robes a testament to the long-standing heritage of a school that has seen far worse days. the final bars of the national anthem rise and swell as your eyes travel down the corridors of an undefiled heritage of the storied past.

you long to go back, to summers well-spent you'd laugh with your cousins over jokes you cannot remember, your attention arrested and suddenly occupied by their boisterous dog, she'd lick your face and you'd both fall down. you like to reminisce about the stories your Nani would tell you, of your childhood, the sweet, pungent aroma of her signature *Aam ka aachar* wafting through the dense air. the warm, fresh-out-of-the-tava aloo parathas await, but it is not enough for your ever-eager appetite.

you would greet guests sometimes, they would ask you "*what you want to study, beta?*" but you didn't have an answer, so your shy smile would do the talking for a while." then, in dadi's open aangan you would sprinkle coloured powder onto the olive floor, hardened by the passage of time. the finished product was a rangoli, you'd smile up at your mother's face, she was proud, you deduced (*oh but you hoped, you really prayed she was, pride was a commodity too precious to sacrifice.*) on Diwali, you'd hasten through the Puja, tie the red thread on your wrist, only to pull it out a week later,

carelessly. gazing admirably at your Dadi, circling incense sticks over elephant gods that you have to believe in, the earthy scent of deep yellow marigolds emanating through the smoke of the puja room. gorging on mithai after every meal with your Dada. you'd help acquaint them with the wonders of the technology you have grown up with, but to them is a reflection of changing times, the roles reversed, the younger generation adopting the role of a teacher, the older, the unsuspecting student. aloo tikki drizzled with dahi, generous amounts of gold-streaked sev and green dollops of chutney, the taste of which lingers in your mind.

and then you'd go back home, awaiting your next visit. they'll tell you to call but you will forget, only birthdays can serve as a reminder of what you leave behind, away from the cosmopolitan society you belong to. they will tease you about your Hindi, and you'd laugh and shrug it off. and maybe, just maybe, you will remember to call.

Footnotes:

the opening lines are from the national pledge.

Nani- maternal grandmother

beta- Hindi for son, basically used to refer to children a ton

Aam ka achaar- mango pickle, a lot of Indian grandmothers love to make this

tava- Stove

aloo parathas- Indian flatbreads stuffed with potato-the ultimate comfort food

Dadi/Dada- paternal grandparents

aangan-kind of an open courtyard in Indian households

rangoli- colourful designs made on Holi/Diwali

Diwali- the Festival of Lights, or the triumph of good over evil

Puja-basically a Hindu ceremony conducted during festivals, where you worship God

mithai- Sweets, usually homemade on festivals

aloo tikki- potato street side snack, kind of hard to explain, lol

dahi- curd

Anoushka Kumar is a 15 year old writer from India who has been previously published in the Cathartic Literary Youth Magazine and the Crossed Paths Magazine. She is also an editor for the Interstellar Literary Review. Aside from writing, her varied interests include playing music at odd hours of the day, crying over poetry and debating the queerness of complex female characters.



Lavender - Prose

By Lujain Assaf

The first thing I saw was purple. An endless sea of purple. It was a lavender field, but I thought we found fairyland.

I scrambled to the window and squinted as best as I could with my poor eyesight to find fairies, thinking that their purple dresses were blending in with the lavenders. But Dad was driving so fast that when he hit the brakes, I toppled off of my seat. The car door next to me swung open, letting in the cool air of the afternoon.

Dad looked down at me. I was so dizzy from my fall that I saw three of him. He reeked from all the beer he usually drowned himself in. He then dragged me out of the car and planted me on the side of the road. That caused the dizziness to worsen, but I didn't tell him that.

Not letting go of my arms, he knelt down to my eye level. He looked serious, which was rare. He was always either goofy or scary, depending on how many drinks he had had.

He crinkled his eyes and tried to give me a kind smile, but his yellow teeth ruined that effect.

“Okay, sweetie, I need you—” He sneezed, right into my face. I wanted to wipe my face, but when I tried to move my arms, he held them down. “Sorry, honey, allergies.”

“Allergies?”

“The flowers make me sick,” he explained to me gently, his nails digging into my arms. “Which is why I need you to go into the field and get Mummy. Did you already forget?”

Of course I already forgot because I was seven years old, but I’ve learned how not to piss him off. “No, Dad,” I replied, relieved when I didn’t stutter. He hated when I did that.

His grip on my arms slightly loosened, but his nails were still digging into my skin. “And do you remember what you have to tell Mummy?”

“Yes, Dad.”

Finally, he let go of my arms and turned me to the field. “Go get her,” he commanded, pushing me forward.

That would have been an easy task if I had any idea where Mum was. Dad failed to give me any directions. The flowers towered over me, making it hard to see where I was going, yet I didn’t dare turn back. I walked blindly into the field. Once I felt far away enough from him, I quietly called out for Mum.

Time passed quickly as I wandered through the lavender field. The sun was already setting, which frightened me. Not because it was getting dark or because I couldn’t find Mum, but because I didn’t want Dad to lose his patience and punish me.

As if a miracle was sent from God, I finally got a response to my calls.

“Talia? Is that you?”

“Mum!” I squealed and ran in the direction of her voice. It should have been a beautiful, heartwarming reunion with the sunset and lavender. Instead, I found her drunk and lying on the ground with a bottle in her hand. She smelled worse than Dad. There was lavender in her hair and her clothes were stained with dirt and alcohol. She looked like a fairy princess that had been trampled on by filthy trolls.

When she saw me, she sat up slightly and gave me a lazy smile. “You found me,” she slurred, raising the bottle in the air as if she was giving a toast, but then she fell back down.

The sight of her made my stomach twist, not because she was drunk beyond reason, but because I had no idea how I would get her back to Dad. If I didn’t, I would be the one punished alongside her. I stood over her, hoping she would say more, but she took another sip from her bottle and spilled liquor onto her face and shirt. She looked up at me, but I felt like she was looking through me. She was in her own fairyland.

“Dad wants to tell you something.”

My words interested her as she actually sat up properly and looked at me, her eyes wide. I couldn’t tell if the shine in her eyes was hope or terror.

“Dad is sorry and loves you and wants you to come home.”

I waited, foolishly expecting Mum to suddenly sober up, grab my hand, and skip through the lavender field into Dad’s open arms.

“That’s it? That’s his great speech?” She scowled and took another sip from her bottle before lying down.

I panicked and tried to remember if there was anything else Dad told me to say, but if there had been, I forgot it. So, I told her something else Dad had muttered in the car –in hopes that it would fix everything.

It had the opposite effect.

Mum slapped me so hard that she knocked me to the ground, but she barely gave me a glance. She stood up and spun around as if looking for something. When she finally stopped spinning, she narrowed her eyes and pointed in a direction.

“You piece of shit!” she screamed into the distance before going into a ramble of insults and profanities.

It seemed like she had spotted Dad at the edge of the field.

I heard Dad scream back faintly. The scream fest began and with every scream from Dad, a sneeze would follow. Soon, his voice started to sound clearer and there was a looming shuffle of steps.

Dad was in the field.

That realization washed over me and left behind a cold trail of fear. I looked up at Mum, trying to think of a way to stop her shouting when a pretty, yellow butterfly flew in front of me. It landed on my knee and I fixated on it, blocking out whatever my parents were screaming at each other. They fought so often that it was probably nothing different from the usual.

I tried to grab the butterfly, but it flew away. I leaped off the ground and followed it, right as Dad finally reached Mum. I heard his grunts and her shrieks, but none of that mattered to me as much as that butterfly did in that moment.

The butterfly was fast, but I was determined to catch it. I ran as fast as my short, chubby legs would allow me. The lavenders got caught on my hair and they brushed against my arms, tickling me. Even though the butterfly was small, its yellow wings stood out against all the purple. It was as if the butterfly was my flashlight through the lavender field, guiding me somewhere. Except I really didn’t care where it was taking me. The butterfly was the closest creature to a fairy that I had ever seen.

I had to have it.

It was about to fly higher out of my reach, so I leaped forward into the air. I will never forget that moment.

I felt like a fairy –weightless, free, magical, powerful.

I somehow grabbed the butterfly, but I instantly realized that it was a terrible idea when I felt the butterfly get squished to death under my plump hands. I didn’t even have time to mourn because when I landed on the ground, I tripped over my own feet and my head fell against a rock. Like a walnut, it cracked wide open and blood poured into the ground.

The blood and pain didn't scare me as much as the dead butterfly did. Its golden wings were folded awfully unto each other and its body was flat. It twitched for a few seconds, giving me hope, but then it went still.

I tried to get up, but my head was anchored to the ground, too heavy to carry. Minutes passed and the butterfly didn't move again. I tried to call for help, for my parents, for anyone, but my voice failed me.

When I could no longer stand the sight of the butterfly, I focused on the lavenders –tall, perfect, and purple even in the dusk. I wondered if there were any fairies here and if they would save me. I waited, almost imagining the shapes of their dresses and the flutter of their wings, but nothing happened. The sun disappeared behind the horizon, leaving me in the darkness. There were no fairies and this was no fairyland.

The last thing I saw was purple.

Lujain Assaf is a nineteen year old fiction writer from Palestine. Her work has previously been nominated for the Media and Research Awards 2020 and Northwestern University's Creative Arts Festival 2020. In addition, she has published her piece, The Lucky One, with 2020vision. She is currently studying at Northwestern University in Qatar and continues to write.



What a Cutie - Prose
By Kaleena Madruga

I think the best thing that happened to me recently was my transformation. Before I completely changed, I was very stressed about all kinds of things. Now, though, my days are filled with little walks and cozy naps. I have tiny little legs and a very big head, but that seems to make people like me more. Before, I was actually much more proportional but I had too much pressure in my life. I had to style myself in a nice way, dress myself in all kinds of different clothes, and decorate my face. Interacting with people was more difficult because I was not just trying to impress them, but they were also trying to impress me! People are funny like that.

Now I just walk outside with my little legs and my big head and people smile at me. Sometimes they say “awe!” or “what a cutie!”, which is so nice. I think I’ll get tired of hearing it eventually, but it hasn’t happened yet.

Before my transformation my relationship was a lot more work. My boyfriend and I got into arguments about listening and compromising and our future. But now, we don’t argue at all. Before, he would make us dinner and we’d sit and talk and drink wine and eat our food. I would do the dishes, most nights. I tried to help. Now he puts my dinner in a bowl and puts it on the floor. Then he goes to play video games.

We used to sleep in the same bed, spooning, like couples do. But now he says that my hair bothers him, so I have to sleep in the living room. Thankfully, my ears are way better than they were before, so I can hop off the couch before he comes out of the room and sees me. He always looks at the hair on the couch and shakes his head, but he never says anything.

Our relationship is very different now, but we still have our walks! He let me pick out a leash, my favorite color: red. He even got me a harness so my neck doesn't hurt if I get too excited. That's the one thing that hasn't changed about our relationship. I always had a tendency to run ahead and leave him behind. I think he likes the fact that he can pull on me a little bit.

I don't think my boyfriend is a jealous person, not too much. Before, when I was more proportional and went on less walks, sometimes men would flirt with me, but not really. This actually made me more insecure about my appearance. Was I getting old? Less attractive? Why didn't anyone else like me? But now I don't have to worry about all that. People are always pleased by me. I think my boyfriend just has less patience now than before, that's all. People are always stopping us and saying: "is that a boy or a girl?" and he will say, "girl."

"What's her name?" they'll ask, and he will say: "Sofia." And they will squeal and ooh and ahh over me until my boyfriend decides to pull me away. I think people would be even more drawn to me if I wore a sweater or some kind of accessory, but my boyfriend won't buy me one.

My dreams are different. I am always running and chasing something that I just can't grab. My little legs will twitch, and I'll grumble and groan in my sleep.

Tonight my boyfriend left the door open just a crack, so I nudge my way in and I sneak up next to him. He smells nice and his body is warm. I try to make myself into a little spoon to his big one, but it just doesn't work. So instead I lay near his feet. I try to shut my big ears off so I can relax and get a good night's sleep. He rolls over, he grumbles and groans like me. He whines just a bit. I feel his feet twitching under me, he's chasing something, too. I wonder what it could be.

Kaleena Madruga is a writer living in Chicago. She received her BA in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University and is currently pursuing her MFA in Creative Writing at Roosevelt University. She is 30 years old and originally from San Diego, California.

