



# Ice Lolly Review

Issue IV 2020

## **Editor's Note**

This particular issue is a long one so we suggest you grab a cup of something hot and a cookie or two before settling in to read. Coziness goes great with reading.

We have received a plethora of submissions ranging from spooky October works to pieces dealing with society and its pressures, to pieces about the sweetness of love. It has been an honor to read every single one of your submissions and we are so so so grateful you guys took precious time out of your day to submit to us.

The magazine has grown so much in the past two months with over 130 submissions from 15 different countries and 15 different US states. Thank you so much for your support.

We would also like to remind our audience that our inboxes on Instagram or Gmail are always open. So if any of you need someone to talk to whether it has to do with writing, advice, or just life in general, our team is always here to support our fellow writers.

Thank you so much again for submitting to our magazine and our team hopes that you guys continue creating and improving your writing. We wish you all the best.

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 4.

- The Editors of Ice Lolly Review.

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**Morning Words by SaraJane**

**Because I'm a dreamer, a wisher, a magic-bean buyer by Jyotsna Nair**

**Send Me Flowers by Lucy Camacho**

**At first, the colours are bright by Natasha Lim**



**The Horizon - Poem**  
**By Rithesh Balu**

A smile I've never seen but  
felt.  
Hands I've never touched  
but held.  
Love I've never imagined  
but felt.  
For the heart works beyond  
The dimensions of sense.  
Know this beautiful  
stranger, that with the  
Same horizon that is  
beheld.  
I see sunlight through this  
hell.

*Rithesh Balu is from Bangalore, India. He's an engineering student in the field of computer sciences. He's a person that believes that everything we do is an art, starting from the way we live to the way we die, hence the name of his Instagram handle - 21 ART. He finds ways to express his love for art through playing musical instruments such as the piano and guitar, singing, drawing, painting and writing poetry. He believes that life loses its meaning without art and that everybody needs to at least acknowledge if not create art.*

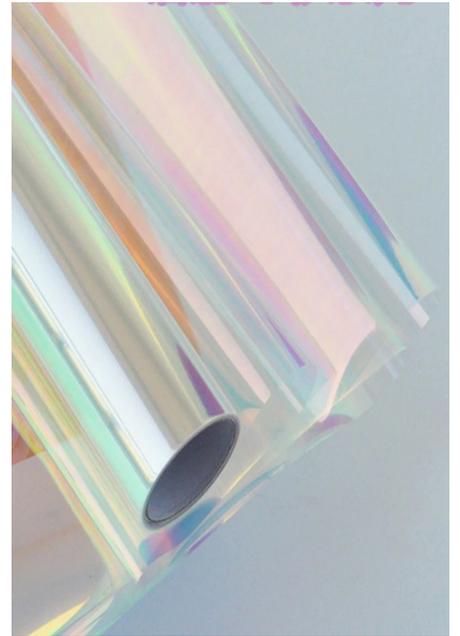
## **cellophane - Poem**

**By Naomi Ling**

plasticity does not unstick so easily from  
my chest like bubblegum i peel it off so that flesh  
festers off of congested wounds & i have sins to  
confess on cracked canyon lips so  
i will move them to the tune of this stifling song  
my mother prayed to the rabbit on the moon  
tonight she chews on cynics like tape on her  
tongue & i have long since *really* talked to her  
like i don't know her favorite color or [what color  
she sees behind her eyelids at night] & i think  
andromeda kissed the earth when she fell because  
my knuckles are puckered against molten ash and i  
think there must be some repentance for me after  
all : everybody loves a girl who can spit blood like  
paint on canvas don't they

i pop my cysts one by one but they still spill into my throat  
like ink from my pen everyone knows poets are paid to lie  
& i think i've made a pretty penny does god see his  
reflection in his knees too because goddamn i kneel on  
mine every morning & i think there's asphalt on my fingers  
again i walked on my hands to church  
but i forgot to rinse them off & now a stranger's  
spit is in my throat & she tastes like lethargy  
someone is wailing from the third floor again  
splatters like pavement splatters like the pinata  
party i never had cellophane is flimsy but it's  
enough to keep me from dreaming  
if i don't pray then why am i dreaming

*Naomi Ling is an emerging student poet on the East Coast, USA. Her poetry and prose grapple with identity and self-image, nostalgia and new love, and most importantly of all, returning to her roots. An editor for *Interstellar Review*, her work has been recognized with National Gold and Silver Medals by the 2019 Scholastic Writing Awards, published in *Cathartic Literary Magazine*, and is forthcoming to be published in *The Heritage Review* and the 2020 *Poetic Power Summer Anthology*. She strongly believes that inspiration strikes her best when she closes her eyelids at night.*





**Do you worry that the trees won't dry up this October? - Poem**  
**By Julie Larick**

Do you worry that the towering trees won't dry up this October? That they won't be parched and coughing up leaves that won't brush the ground and crackle with brown brittle from a night of frost? That night of frost that won't ever come that the wind will be a remainder, trenched in ghastly angering heat and maybe even the wind won't come, the air will stand stock, chicken soup on a June mid afternoon burning your tongue as it comes straight off the pot? Do you wonder if your nerves that flare from the heat won't ever calm down because it's already October and it's still so hot, so hot and it might be so hot in December, and you'll stay angry forever because the heat sets you off, and you love the nights of frost although they make your spirits sad? Stay young and go dance in the chilled nights of fall, underneath the parched night Sky that spat up last night's frost and although you tremble with fear that the tree in the lawn by the old dentist's office will never crinkle or die, at least your worry will replace the frost.

*Julie Larick is a seventeen-year-old writer and freshman at the College of Wooster. She is majoring in English and Spanish. Julie is a resident of Shaker Heights, Ohio, and dreams of moving to Iowa City. Her writing has been recognized by the Parallax Fiction Contest, Pen Ohio, Teen Voice Media, Kalopsia Lit, Lake Erie Ink, and she is an alumna of Iowa Young Writers' Studio and ArtWorks. She loves to sew with old fabric, play with her cats, and take walks.*



**NATURE, THE BIGGEST TEACHER! - Poem**  
**By Saumya Bhardwaj**

O thee nature how much you teach us,  
So calmly so easily without a fuss,  
Each and everyday you make us wonder,  
Did I lose my virtues in that thunder?

Each and every aspect of your,  
Big either small or,  
Comes to me everyday and tells,  
How us humans have created a mess!

Imagine if we lived like them,  
So placid and self contained,  
Lived everyday to the fullest,  
Escaping our own little nest.

Only if we were as happy as a lark,  
As hardworking as an ant,  
I wonder what all difference it could have made,  
If we humans got this alchemy of nature within us, readymade!

*Saumya Bhardwaj is from Maharashtra, Thane. She is 15 years old and currently studying in standard 10th. During her study breaks she loves to read and write. She has been writing poetry since 4th standard.*



## **Rosewater - Poem**

**By Bo Walker**

Sod, colored pink, hanging in its so-called “face”  
Genderless thing creeping through aisles  
You irk at the sight of it, as would anyone.  
Who let me in?

*Bo walker is an aspiring editor and artist from Hackettstown, New Jersey. They find the most joy in indie music, cosplaying, visual novels, and drawing. Although Bo spends most of their time in their room, that’s where most of the magic happens.*



## **Ruska - Poem**

**By Sanchi**

Ruska-Fall foliage  
In streets of Amsterdam  
walking on the golden  
red autumn leaves  
as the night draws in  
and the fire sets lit.

Sitting on the wooden bench  
during sunset waiting for twilight  
listening to the birds chirping  
The glistening colour of sun  
illuminates the air.

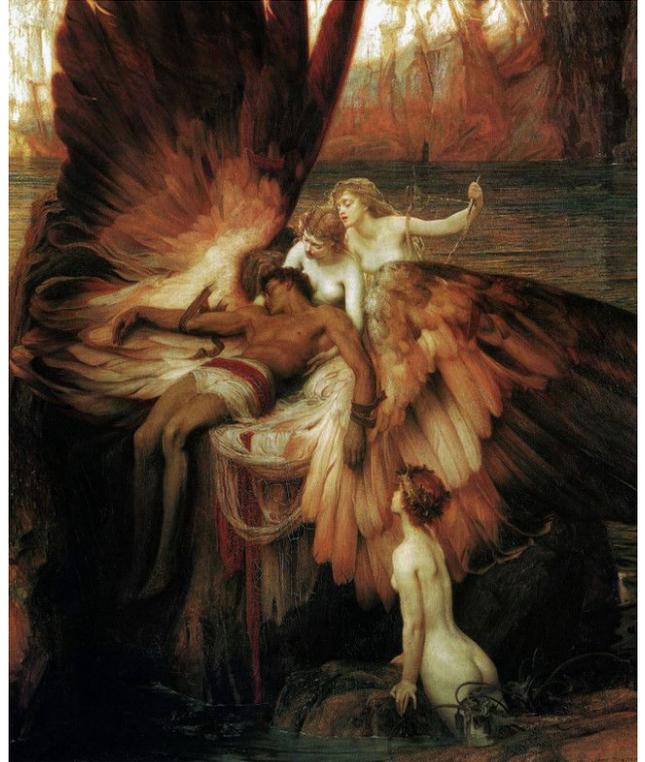
I saw the leaves pattering  
down the big oak tree  
just like every human  
who for once in a year  
falls and rises for winter.

*Sanchi is a 17 years old girl who hails from Gharaunda, 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.*

## **I Flew Like Icarus - Poem**

**By Nana Opare-Addo**

I flew like Icarus.  
My diaphanous wings spanned,  
as great satiety filled me within.  
Like an unchained bird,  
the confined state I was imprisoned  
in, was no longer apparent.  
Only soaring higher & higher,  
looking below at the picturesque  
buildings, I only imagined a future  
of mellow memories.  
I flew like Icarus.  
Melting from the harsh rays of  
one wicked sun, I crashed recklessly.  
Seemingly, my flight wasn't the only  
thing demolished. As if my conscience  
was also made out of wax, my high  
expectations had been terminated by the  
blindness of my own stupidity.  
Watching as my wings dissolved,  
hopes of mellow memories, and picturesque  
buildings dissolved with them.



*Nana Opare-Addo is a thirteen-year old writer who resides in New York. When she was younger, she became fascinated by a variety of poems & short stories, so she began writing. Writing under the nom de plume, Vicarious, Nana is currently a teen writer at WritetheWorld.com!*





## **Childhood - Poem**

**By Prachi**

When I remember those old days  
When our only work was to play  
Those cherishing memories make me smile  
And that happiness can't be defined

Our universe revolved around toys  
I remember how we used to enjoy  
Hours seemed to be seconds  
Time just flew away  
Those are the moments we cherish

When I remember that child  
Who used to play day and night  
Tears roll down my eyes  
those days were the real surprise

Stress was not a part of our life  
We were only found with a smile all the time  
Anger and jealousy did not knock our doors

Everyone wants to live those moments a little 'More'

From playing all days on the streets  
To being alone  
And sticking to that 'Mobile phone'  
We all grew up

Life was full of colors  
Friendship was real  
Love was pure  
But everything faded with this tag of 'Mature'

CHILDHOOD - Just a word to say  
But holds thousands of memories in it  
Undoubtedly those were the best memories we keep

Thinking about all those days we cry  
But remember!  
There is a child still alive in us  
There will always be

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



## **If mothers were candles and we were mortal matches - Poem**

**By Maya Henry**

Charr clouds the room but  
It's always numbed me  
tepid base

the candles are no longer burning.  
like the copper candle holders against the

how wick can burn through  
fondly how

its own wax without remembering  
complete it was yesterday.

Yesterday,

I lit five candles and within  
four minutes only  
three were still burning.  
than none. I've always refused to understand

Three is more

where wax slithers after it is marked unneeded by its own kin. Is this how my

mother

feels when I tell her I didn't choose to be born as hers. Am I the wick she has pledged to  
preserve

and now I think I'm immune to ash and now I've left  
the port. I don't know where my mother will go next. Or like wax, has she been waiting to be

free of my burden for too long to remember, but it's been fourteen years in the making and I  
have let a flame flicker beneath her until she was  
consumed

only rusted remains.

This was yesterday.

Yesterday, I felt too naked                      and not exposed enough                      and lit candle  
after candle as if

burning another bridge

I would never have to walk over would rebuild the one on my daily route.                      I'm sorry  
for saying I wanted you dead. Sometimes I omit just because we are flammable  
does not mean

we are meant to be burned

*Maya Henry (she/her) is a queer poet trying to be a better human being. She's based in California and is 14.*



## **Dancing Through Thunderstorms - Poem**

**By Ash Woodland**

She wakes up with her head spinning,  
She goes through the motions in an echo of sounds,  
But the movements seem staggered,  
Like she not the one in control,  
She stands frozen, blurry vision and a heart that pounds.

She feels like she has already drowned,  
Drifting to the only land that hasn't been covered by salt,  
But the waves keep on spiraling, icy water creating a clear blue casket,  
The monsters whisper that it's all her fault.

She can't tell if it's been years or months or minutes since she was able to not feel so  
afraid,  
But the fear turns to numbness,  
The fight to defeat,  
She feels paralyzed but is told to be brave.

Peoples' words ricochet off the walls moving in closer around her,  
The food on the plate sits untouched,  
All the hope of climbing out of the hole is buried as soil erodes from the top,

No amount of “it’ll get better soon,” ever seems to be enough.

When the earth turns on its axis a little too fast,  
Or when the whispers turn to shouts and screams,  
Fight or flight.

She turns to run away from her mind,  
Panic prickling her body,  
She forgets how to breath.

She can’t ignore the monsters in her head any longer,  
She stares at her reflection and aches to know where she has gone, Her  
mind seems scattered like a puzzle with pieces gone missing, But oh,  
don’t worry, she’s fine, she’ll be strong.  
But next week seems unreachable,  
Yesterday feels like a lifetime ago,  
Time is just an illusion, a construct, a blur.  
But the days fade into the next,  
getting darker every time the sun comes up,  
never making space for the remaining light to show.

She can’t bring herself to speak  
But she forces herself to stay  
The monsters shout that she’s a fool,  
Doesn’t she know there’s an easier way?

Doesn’t she know it’ll always be like this?  
There’s no light left, just the familiar dark that creeps inside her brain,  
They tell her there’s no point in reaching upwards when nothing is real,  
That she’ll never escape,  
All she’ll feel is the same.

But oh, how could she possibly think this way when there’s a blue sky above?  
When there are trees and birds and laughter and words filled with love. But the  
monsters don’t care about ice cream  
Or the inspirational quotes she finds online,  
They blur out the beauty she saw before  
And send rainclouds to erase the sunshine.

She holds up the storm for as long as she can manage  
but the roaring wind gets too strong to contain,  
The rain clouds burst,  
And clutching what's left of her fading spirit,  
She gazes upwards,  
Clothes drenched from the rain.

She watches with a vacant expression  
As the earth comes down in flood,  
Everyone screams in terror,  
But she's immune to the cold.  
She can breath underwater,  
But her throat fills with blood.

She watches as the buildings are broken into thousands of pieces  
And the roads crumble into sand on the ocean floor,  
Pitch black smoke fills the sky,  
Salty water stinging her eyes,  
And blurring her vision even more than before.

But something peculiar begins to happen,  
Something she never thought she'd live to see.  
And she couldn't tell you if it was weeks or months or a lifetime  
That she was stranded out at sea.

She couldn't point to the date on the calendar that the rising water began to subside,  
But it did.  
Slowly, the salt stopped stinging so badly  
And she was able to open her eyes...

Her soaking wet clothes began to dry again as a ray of sun shone down and warmed her  
cracked skin,  
She noticed the care in peoples' eyes,  
Was it there before?  
The monsters seemed softer,  
Like they were tired of reaching in.

And slowly, as the moon and stars rose each night  
It became easier to hope for the sun,  
And although the monsters tried their best to take her hostage again, It  
became clear that  
She was the powerful one.

Now, I know that this girl would want me to tell you  
That it is not your fault,  
Darkness can be painful,  
It can make the universe crash to a halt.

So, acknowledge that there are monsters,  
But never let them define who you are,  
You are so much more than the thunderstorms in your mind,  
But the storms are valid,  
And so are the scars.

And even though you may lose some battles,  
That's alright.  
You'll win the ones that count the most,  
You'll learn to love your scars because they show where you've been -  
They're thunderbolts, they're comets, they're kisses from ghosts.

And I know you've probably heard this more than a million times,  
But you WILL see the sky again,  
The fog WILL fade,  
You'll make friends with your mind.

Count the end of every day as a victory,  
Look at yourself and see how far you've come,  
Don't let your past make you think less of your future,  
You're electrifying,  
As bright as the sun.

And I know that these are just words on a page,  
But know that possibility never disappears,  
Someday soon you'll be dancing through the thunderstorms,

So much bigger than all the fears.

And even though it's not a linear equation  
that we can work out the answer to,

I promise,

We'll get there,

We'll find a way,

It'll make sense again...

Because there is a universe

Inside of you.

*Ash Woodland (15) is a girl from South Africa with a passion for writing and film. She loves to write poetry and it has been an amazing creative outlet for her when it comes to channeling her thoughts and expressing herself freely. She also loves to make videos out of those poems in order to try and bring the words to life. In poetry, she likes to focus on self identity as well as the planet and the connection between people and nature.*



## **A Soapbox Floating in Bleach - Poem**

**By Lorna McBain**

If my truth is unheard, then what am I alive for?

If I have a tongue, but refuse to speak

Then why do I own it?

I stood on my soapbox today

Ranting to bleached faces

In a bleached crowd

In a bleached world.

My soulless, speechless peers,

What utter joy your blank pages brings me!

I could almost see the words while I was blind.

It seems that I forgot that I had

Ripped my eyeballs from their sockets

And bleached them, similar to your brain.

Does the fragility of the 'insane'

Reassure the 'sane' of their sanity?

If insanity is a risk to society,

Then lock away our politicians!

For their brains seem bleached too.

In a desperate time of needing change

They refused to stand and speak.

So, I ripped their vocal cords from their throats

And crushed them beneath the weight of our bleached world.

Now, you try speaking with no ability

All you can do is stand and talk with me on my soapbox.

*Lorna McBain is a brand new, fresh, young poet who has previously been published in RISEN magazine. When she's not writing Lorna can often be found reading, watching old movies, and listening to an eclectic range of music.*



**Ice cream - Poem**  
**By Shivi Dixit**

I watch silently  
as the ice cream on my (white) shirt  
melts away slowly,  
seeping deep into its hearth.

I could, but I do nothing.  
The ice cream has finally melted.  
So I pretend to be not looking  
But I know my shirt is forever tainted.

*Shivi Dixit is an Indian student, aged 16. She currently writes short horror stories and poems as a hobby. Using the power of words, she aspires to create something that makes people feel a million emotions, one at a time.*



## **Sunrise Harmony - Poem**

**By MeadowZ**

Little birds are singing,  
Their songs rise up like softest clouds.  
Trees are awake,  
Those rustling leaves won't ever let you sleep.

Even the earth has to open her eyes,  
Not to sing them back to bed,  
But to enjoy the life that shines,  
After a good resting night.

Close your eyes,  
Take the deepest breath,  
Rest your hands by your sides,  
Lift your head up toward the sky.  
Stand very still.

And that's all you have to do.

As these sounds,  
So gentle, so far beneath  
Many layers of songs,

Can only be heard,  
By your most inner soul.  
The heart, then the mind.

Some may call them nature's unnamed songs.  
Or lullabies of the earth.

But actually,  
They should have been called,  
and righteously so,  
The sunrise harmony.

*MeadowZ is 26 and lives in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.*



## **MICROCHIPS - Poem**

**By Debadrita**

We are chips  
You, me, her, him  
Scattered across territory  
Floating nonconformists in the galaxy

Then comes society  
Hey, lost soul  
Let me integrate you  
Into a category

You're too wild  
You're too free  
We offer you a manual to behave  
A rule bound prison to live in

Sleep during the night  
Work during the day  
You're either a man or a woman  
That's nature's way

Be a lady  
Do what you're told

Cross your legs  
Wear some heels, here you go  
Learn to clean, learn to cook  
Skills to keep your man happy  
You don't want him to leave you  
Be shy, be a damsel  
Dial 911, call for a rescue  
The men got you  
You have to care for yourself  
Doll face,  
Wear a skirt  
Leave the pants for your man,  
Hun'

Hello boy  
Don't be sad  
Man up  
Be a stud.  
Don't be shy, tiger  
You just need an arm candy.  
Dress gangsta or be dandy.  
Don't be a sensitive guy  
You gotta earn, you gotta provide  
That's all contributing to your self worth  
Nothing else matters, boy  
Bulk yourself up  
You skinny chicken  
Why you sitting?  
You should be dickin'

We are one big family  
Such impeccable choreography  
You're one of us, if you fit in  
We don't recognize you if you have other opinions.  
Loser.

*Debadrita is from Calcutta, India. She enjoys playing video games and psychoanalyzing people way too much.*



**What is love? - Poem**  
**By Sarah Chaudhry**

What is love?  
Is it the meeting in secret on a midsummer night?  
Is it the twinkling of stars with captivity and wonder that we can't quite yet  
comprehend?

Or is the concept of love the purpose of life and death?  
To fall in or out or never to have fallen at all?  
Perhaps love is what determines how our lives will be judged in this world or in the  
next?  
Is love the secret to an unknowing, gleaming future?  
Like the fresh smell of petrichor after a long rainy day.

Or is it something deeper such as destiny or a mere fool's wit?

Does being in love mean to fall for the unknown and the romances that delve beneath it?  
Like a hunter stalking for prey that ends up winded with far more than a mere hunt.  
Is it the warmth you feel when you wake up next to someone or sneaking kisses under  
the moonlight?  
Or is love a riddle too hard to solve?  
Like the dark blue depths of the Atlantic where creatures the human can't fathom lurk  
about?

Surely, love is an intricate puzzle of sorts, complex and meticulously drawn like a spider spinning a web.

Right?

Or is love a trap where the web entangles souls and the hunter becomes the hunted and the tricked with hopes of disbelief?

Or is love the spark of the soul that no one else could conjure as warm fuzzy feelings settle in the pits of sinners and saints' stomachs?

*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, Ice Lolly Magazine, and IRIS Mag, 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.*



**Your Bedroom - Poem**  
**By Vibhavari Desai**

I have been in your bedroom before,  
Sat in the middle of your bed, my head on your shoulder like an ice-cream cone melting  
in picture books,  
I have taunted my reflection in the solitary bookcase that stood tall next to the solitary  
window,  
I have heard pigeons dance with wild abandon on the angular roof,  
I have held your hand — apprehensively,  
I have taken a bite of your sandwich — cautiously,  
Your mother's retreating footsteps were audible: fading as she approaches the door  
and echoing when she turns back,  
Nothing in your sister's glances betrayed disgust,  
Your *dadi* is deaf in one ear but nothing in her practiced smile revealed the thinness of  
the shared wall,  
They will get used to it, you laughed,  
A Saturday afternoon homage to your stretch marks;  
Soft, silvery branches of the tree of life.

I have been in your bedroom before,  
Thumbed through your favourite novels,  
Held your pillow close to the cavity in my chest,  
Ruffled my fingers through your hair as you laid on my lap,  
Origami swans adorning the window sill,  
Drenched, dressed in our silly we-made-out-in-the-cinema-hall smiles,  
Inhibitions sitting cross-legged on the floor for the clothes that would quickly follow,  
I have tasted every taste:  
Teardrops trembling across your jaw; sheen of sweat on my upper-lip;

A hint of burnt caramel in between your trembling thighs; first spoon of *dal-chawal*;  
Thundering guilt lodged in your rib cage, just beneath the curve of your left breast;  
Crushed petals; the dimples slumbering at the bottom of your back,  
You held me in rooms we could barely afford — quietly,  
(I strung together *no*'s in my head: *no-no-no-no-no-no-*)  
You protested when I held your wrist to stop you — loudly,  
You took the rumbling train back home, one hand waving, one slipped in the  
disappointment,  
dislike, distaste lining the pocket of your trousers,  
Nothing in your phone call betrayed the getting-used-to that you had not gotten used to,  
Your friends knew my name but they knew his too,  
A Thursday evening wreck;  
Pause...play...pause...rewind...pause...replay.

I have been in your bedroom before,  
Clicked pictures of our lips crashing like the waves finally meeting the shoreline,  
Swayed in your arms,  
no music,  
just your stifled laughter washing over me,  
I have watched sunsets from the solitary window with you,  
I have traced, with my lips, the unnamed constellation situated at the base of your nape,  
I have apologised — unnecessarily,  
You have not apologised —  
Your mother's footsteps, I imagine, no longer announce her disdain,  
Your sister blinks more often,  
Your *dadi* continues offering her morning prayers, and  
listens to her commercials without toying with the radio's knobs,  
A Sunday night spent imagining;  
The doctor says I should stop.

I have been in your bedroom before,  
Lied to my father,  
Smiled at yours,  
I have driven past the Hotel near your house, felt something and nothing,  
I have sat on the roof on which we kissed  
a summer ago,  
I have smashed the solitary photo frame that sat on the desk next to your solitary  
window and then sat on the desk next to my solitary window,  
I have allowed you into my life again, and you have let me in yours,  
A Tuesday noon apology delivered too late,  
I have been in your bedroom before,

But it looks cleaner now.

*Vibhavari Desai (she/her) is a 20-year-old student from India. She is a new writer, who struggles to strike a balance between schoolwork and her voracious appetite for words. She loves her cat to the point of distraction.*



**Poem For a Tear Drop - Poem**  
**By Oz Leshem**

i. something i needed to say

the last leech on my cheek i spread my gum into  
legacy. spit my bone into leisure. rip my flesh from the  
melody.

to fill a body with goosebumps is to say, a thread woven  
down the spine cannot be tethered to another person. but the  
spigot of your heart can be spread to each blade of grass  
growing inside of it.

ii. something i needed to write

a tarnished taboo to be reckoned with. tilted talisman  
of a body. turmoil thawing out your restlessness.

trust in the pen is a tempt shiver. a constant questioning of  
what line should go next. teeter, stumble over terse. words  
become the task. your throat: tacks and needles. and *one*  
drop is a good enough tirade.

iii. something that's pulling me

iv.





**New Fantasia - Prose**  
**By Ruth Thomas**

She let the life blood of her art drip through her fingers, powder blue handprint swirling with the one of gold, *swoosh*-ing across as if to make a sky filled with golden clouds, glimmering in the sun.

The clouds began to smear into blobs, gold turned gray as her limp hand dripping in dark and drab slowly slathered across the surface, black and blue drips trickling down and staining a streak of the perfect sky.

A fist of red struck the canvas, bloody, fiery, fury-driven as it slashed across the colors, fingertips bared as claws as it seemingly ripped and clashed with her new hand of a thunderous, sea-storm blue.

The ravage of colors ceased, and she washed her hands clean of their bleeding, colorful rage.

She dipped one of her hands in the toasting glow of orange, and the other in the dazzle of the vibrant magenta, letting her fingers add sprinkles and dashes forgivingly in all the still-blank spaces before tickling the canvas more with a bright, icy blue and a green the color of fresh and new life.

Then she began to splatter, dipping the tips of her fingers in each color one at a time. She flicked the droplets onto the canvas one after the other, hands bursting open like flowers opening their petals, or stars being thrown into the sky.

One by one, pinpricks of colored droplets, oranges, greens, reds, blues, purples and yellows, blacks and greys and golds and whites pittered down against the fiery-storm surviving, life-giving, peace-holding sky in a whirlwind of power and beauty.

This wasn't just a painting.

This, *this* was a self-portrait.

She stood in front of the canvas, her beautiful, tie-dyed, Jackson Pollock, Starry-Night of finger painting stretched before her as she blew strands of hair from her face and attempted to wipe a smudge of green from her nose. A knock came from the door, and a man leaned his head in without waiting for a response.

“Is *that* your painting?” He scoffed, raising his eyebrow at the work she had poured herself into.

“Yes,” she wiped her hands on her overalls. “It just needs to dry, then it’s ready for the show! I call it The Wild Soul,” she gazed back at her portrait lovingly.

“Don’t bother naming it,” He shook his head, squinting his eyes, “it’s too messy, the colors are too loud, a child could have made that. No self-respecting institute would accept something as unprofessional and amateur as *that*.”

*Ruth Thomas has lived in Iowa City, Iowa for almost the entirety of her 17 years of existence. She loves listening to Hozier, trying to keep her cat out of trouble, and making things with her hands, whether it's writing, baking, or crocheting.*



**Morning Words - Prose**  
**By SaraJane**

The radiant light majestically shined in through the dazzling curtains hung from the rod attached to the wall right above the window. A delightful breeze wandered in through the small crack of the open window. The birds splendidly tweeted along the wall with their grand song that they sang on this charming morning. The warmth of the soft and cozy blankets was just divine on this fall morning. Hot tea was on the stove, steeping. The tea was giving off an irresistible mint smell. The neighbors were being considerate and not shouting this morning. A handsome street cat jumped from house to house with its magnificently strong legs. Mornings like these were rare, so I held onto it.

*SaraJane 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."*



**Because I'm a dreamer, a wisher, a magic-bean buyer - Prose**  
**By Jyotsna Nair**

I write because it's like tasting the first snowflakes of winter, tracing your name into packed sand, lining your eyes in molten gold. I write because the letters are feathers, and the words form wings, and the sentences let me soar through worlds I've birthed. I write because I want you to come in, to see the tapestry I've woven, touch my words and ask yourself if they feel like raw silk or soft pashmina or coarse hemp. I want you to play in the world I've made. I want you to go to sleep in it and wake up wondering whether you're home or not.

I write because sometimes I get unexpected visitors in my head, and they refuse to leave until they've told me about their favorite flower, how they got that scar on their knee, why they cry when they look at the tattered red scarf that hangs limply from their hand. I write because if I don't, they will slam my heart with their fists, demanding to be let out, insisting that I preserve them in ink or text or at least a scrawl of crayon. I write because when I do, I am the boy who found a secret door that led him to other worlds. I am the baby abandoned by the river. I am the girl who ran away from home and returned a warrior. I'm the little kid gazing at the moon through a broken window and dreaming of a better place.

I write for those who cannot write themselves--for the girls killed as soon as they left the

womb, people butchered just because they were different, children who grew up only with the sting of slaps. I write for those who have never felt the grip of a pencil in their gritty palms. I write for those who can't, let their words pour out of me and onto pages. I write to show you that although my words may look black and white, the world isn't, and there are huge gaps of grey. I write to force you to look at what you tell yourself isn't there. I write because I want to make you fight alongside, be it with a pen or sword or your voice.

I write not because I am the master of the words, but their servant. I write because if I don't, it feels like I have failed them.

*Jyotsna Nair is a seventeen-year old currently living in Kerala, India. She mostly writes prose fiction, and her work has previously been published in Canvas Literary Journal, Cathartic Youth Literary Journal, Ogma Magazine, and The Apprentice Writer. She is a firm believer in the power of banana bread, and has been known to consume copious amounts in alarmingly short intervals of time.*



## **Send Me Flowers - Prose**

**By Lucy Camacho**

It was a week before Halloween when I started receiving the flowers. Every day I would find a flower outside my doorstep and I couldn't help but remember the thing I made Richard promise me so many years before on our wedding day:

"Send me flowers, at least once a week, so I know you still love me."

At first I thought the flower thing was a joke. I thought that if I threw them away then, maybe, whoever was leaving them would leave me alone in my endless hibernation.

What I wasn't expecting was to turn around on October 31st and find my deceased husband blankly staring at me, completely oblivious that he was about to give me the best night of my life.

"Why did you throw away the flowers?"

I stared dumbfounded at the young man in front of me. He looked like Richard, talked like him and even moved like him. But he couldn't be. Richard died a year before on October 31st in a car crash. It was simply impossible.

"Who are you?"

He stared at me, confused.

"Who are you?" I said, this time louder, with more power in my voice as I discreetly looked for the bat I hid beside my bed.

"What do you mean?" He said with pleading eyes. "It's me, Richard. Your husband."

I shook my head. "No, Richard died a year ago."

He smiled his crooked smile, the one I'd fallen for in my crazy college years .

"That's the thing, Tina, I'm alive! At least, I think so. Or well, for a week. I've been alive this whole week. I don't know how it happened, I remember being somewhere and thinking of how I wanted you to know that I'd never stop loving you. And there I was, in a cemetery with a flower in my hand. I was very confused so I did the first thing that came to my mind; I put the flower on your doorstep."

I shook my head and stepped back. I sat on my bed with my head in my hands. This couldn't be happening. It was impossible.

"You died beside me. I saw your lifeless body being pulled out of the wrecked car. I saw them bury you. I helped them put the dirt in your hole. I went to your funeral; I read a speech I didn't finish because I couldn't stop crying. You're not real, I'm dreaming. Yes, that's it. My nightmares of you coming back are becoming real."

He walked towards me but stopped when he saw the fear in my eyes. "Tina, I'm so sorry. I remember your speech, somehow, and it was beautiful. Thank you. And I'm sorry for making you go through so much pain in the past year, but please, can you make my last night alive worth living?"

I considered my options. Either I was dreaming, which wasn't an unusual thing for me in the past year, or I was being pranked by some idiot.

Or my dead husband was actually alive. But I couldn't really believe that. Could I?

In my confusion, I did the only thing that seemed logical in order to figure out who the man standing in front of me was.

"Tell me something only Richard would know."

His eyebrows scrunched together the same way Richard's did when he was thinking.

"When you were nine you had a goldfish named Mr. Bob and even though you told everyone he died because your brother forgot to feed him, the reason he actually died was because you took him out of the water thinking he wanted to see the trees."

I thought about another way to test him. I decided to do the next best thing: rapidly question him.

"What's my favorite color?"

"Gray."

"Favorite food?"

"My mom's spaghetti and meatballs."

"Favorite dessert?"

"Cookie dough ice cream."

"Favorite movie?"

"Star Wars episode IV."

"What's my favorite thing to do?"

"On cold and rainy days you like to make a fort and go inside to drink hot chocolate and watch Netflix."

"What's the last thing I said to you?"

"You asked, 'You'll love me forever, right?'"

"And what did you answer?"

""Even from the grave.""

I stared at him in awe. He knew the things no one did, the things I kept locked up in order to not be laughed at. He even knew our last conversation, one that he wouldn't be able to know unless it was really him.

And it was.

He was Richard.

My Richard.

It took some seconds for the thoughts to sink in. Richard was somehow alive for one night and for some reason the thought of me having lost my mind was way beyond reason. This was real; it was no nightmare.

I tried to keep calm and not to go crazy, but all rational thought went out the window the moment my dead husband walked into my bedroom.

"So you're alive until tonight?"

He opened his mouth to respond but then closed it. He thought about it for a few more seconds and talked.

"If my understanding of my current situation is correct, then yes. I have until tonight." I nodded slowly. This was a situation I never pictured being in.

"I'm a little bit freaked out right now, but since this may be my last chance of seeing you then tell me. What do you want to do?"

How was I so calm in such a situation? I have no idea. But did I care? Not one ounce. He smirked in the way only Richard knew how and I couldn't help the excitement when his eyes lit up. Is it weird I felt excited about hanging out with a not-so-much-anymore dead guy?

Half an hour later we were in the town next door. Somewhere no one had heard about the fatal car crash Richard and I had been in.

"What if someone recognizes you?" He laughed.

"I guess the point of me being alive on Halloween is so that people just brush it off as a ghost or that they're paranoid because of all the creepy stuff going around. Seriously, what is creepier than kids asking adult strangers for candies?"

I couldn't help but laugh at his statement. It was something we'd discussed every year on Halloween, debating whether we'd let our future child go trick or treating or not.

The thought of never being able to have a child with the man I loved was heartbreaking, but I didn't let him see.

I parked in front of the water park and we got out of the car. Nerves were taking control of my body. I was afraid we'd get caught up in a mess if someone recognized him. I mean, it's not like anyone actually would. The news of the car crash was only in town for a week until they moved on to the next big thing. It was very unlikely, but I was afraid nonetheless.

We went to the front of the park, it was closed. Of course, why would a water park be opened on Halloween?

I turned around to look at Richard. "It's closed. I'm sorry... Anything else you want to do?"

He gave me a smile that made me remember for a moment that he had died. In that moment he looked like the ghost I was sure he was. The smile that made me question whether he was a good guy, or a bad guy.

The fear in my eyes was probably evident, because as soon as he saw me take a few steps back his face softened. His eyes no longer had the look of a troublemaker (a look he hadn't had in years). His eyes were a soft brown again, the one I'd fallen in love with. I had to remind myself over and over again that he was not my Richard. He was dead, no. He was not dead. Not tonight. But I couldn't fall for him again. It would only end in more pain.

"Lucky for you, Tina, we both know how to climb a fence." I looked at him, confused.

"What?"

He laughed and flashed me his smile. "Do you trust me?"  
I frowned. Was this really a good time for this conversation?

"Yeah...I mean, I think." He held out his hand for me to hold. I looked at it, it wasn't burnt and it wasn't cut. His hand was okay; exactly how it wasn't after the crash. I hesitated before taking it and till this day it has been the second best decision I have ever made after saying "I do".

His hand was surprisingly warm, which meant two things. For one, he wasn't lying. He was in fact alive. And second, I wasn't dreaming.

We walked to the back of the park where it was completely dark. Richard looked up to the top of the fence surrounding the water park and started to climb.

I stared at him in amazement, I'd known him for ten years and he'd never shown this much crave for adventure. Maybe it was a side effect of death.

We climbed up the fence. He climbed with an ease and rhythm I'd never seen before and something told me he'd done a lot of fence climbing in the last few days.

I started climbing the fence, only to slip when I was still a few feet from being on the other side. I thought I'd fall and become a human pancake, even though I know that at that height I would've had at most a sprained ankle .

I prepared myself for impact and a possible broken back, but the impact never came. Two strong arms held me before I hit the ground. I didn't have to look up to realize that it was Richard.

He put me to the ground and said, "Tina! Are you okay?" I could see the concern in his eyes and for just a second I had forgotten where we were and about our current situation.

"Yeah, yeah. I'm okay. So, what do you want to do here?"

He looked around and his eyes landed on something that made me want to puke.

The "Water Mountain" is the ride that Richard tried convincing me to ride ever since it opened. I was always too scared to try it out.

The day of the car crash we were on our way to the water park. I'd finally caved to riding the Water Mountain.

We weren't even out of town when a car came out of nowhere and hit us, making the

car do more flips than I thought possible.

Richard saw the ride and his eyes wandered somewhere else but I took his hand. "Let's try this one out."

I led him to the Water Mountain and we were both more scared than we'd ever been before.

I didn't know why the power and the rides were working, but I had never cared about breaking the rules and unexplained questions so little as I did then.

Any kind of fear that we'd had in the beginning of the night was far gone by the tenth time we rode the Water Mountain.

I glanced at the clock. 10:45. An hour and fifteen minutes left with the love of my life. "How are all the attractions here working?" I asked.

He winked at me. "I have my ways." I rolled my eyes and laughed.

"Fine. When I discovered I wasn't dead anymore I asked Mark for help. And well, Mark's still the manager of this place so he's kind of controlling all this."

I smiled. I imagined he scared the crap out of his best friend, and he did it because of me. "Why don't we ride another thing? Like the Love Ride."

I looked at him confused. "Are you trying to make me fall for you again on our last night together?"

As soon as the words got out of my mouth I regretted them. They caused us both great pain knowing that we wouldn't see each other again after tonight.

He smiled and took my hand. We didn't go to the Love Ride, instead we went to my favorite ride in the whole park: Long River.

The Long River was basically just going down a water slide into an artificial river on some sort of round boat. It was there where Richard and I had had our first kiss nearly twelve years ago.

His smile turned into the smirk of a little boy when they get a bad idea. He yelled, "Last one there is a rotten egg!"

It would've been so bad if it was close but the ride was to the other side of the park

and I after refusing to get out of the house for a year, I wasn't exactly the most athletic person.

I got to the ride first. "I wo-"

I was interrupted by a hand on my mouth. Richard put his finger to his lips and mouthed the word "cops".

We walked silently to the back of the park, right where the fence where I'd fallen was. We began climbing the fence with no trouble, which of course meant there would be trouble.

Half way down the fence a cop lit his flashlight at us. "Hey you! Stop right there!"

Normal human beings would've followed the police officers instructions and given themselves in, especially since we were there with the manager's permission, but considering my dead husband came back to life to visit me I'm not sure either of us classified under the category of "normal".

So we did what we thought was right. We ran. We ran to my car and sped underneath the night sky.

We drove for about an hour until I was sure we'd lost them. I parked in an empty field in the skirts of town. My pickup truck had always been useful for stargazing and tonight was no different.

I set a blanket on the back part of the truck and we laid on our backs. He wrapped his arms around me and I put my head on his chest, just like it had been a year ago. It was hard not to think of how easy things would be if he hadn't died, if we hadn't crashed. Everything would be different, everything would be okay.

But it wasn't.

It wasn't, because on October 31st of last year I was in a car crash with my husband. He died holding my hand while I begged him not to leave me. I'd spent a year grieving him and the life that was stolen from us. Now he was there with me for one last time, and there was nothing easy about that. Nothing normal or okay. This was my life, grieving for the man I never got to say goodbye to.

Tears fell down my face and he noticed right away. He wiped away the tears and replaced them with a smile.

Despite the hollowness in my chest, it was in that moment that I realized it didn't matter if things would never be like they were because he'd given me the best night I'd had in a very long time.

I'd broken into a water park at night, ran from the cops and spent the night with the person I thought I'd lost forever. Yes, there were no doubts. That was the best night of my life.

As I drifted to sleep I heard him whisper in my ear.

"I will never stop loving you Tina. Not even death can tear us apart. Move on, live your life. You don't have to worry about me, I'll be okay."

I woke up the next morning with a start. It was a dream. It was all a dream. It was now November 1st and I'd finally survived the dream where Richard came back. Confused from the tiredness that persisted in my head from the weird dream, I looked to the side of my bed and found something I wasn't expecting to find.

A flower and a note that said, "Don't look for me. I'm gone."

*Lucy Camacho is a 17 year old writer from Costa Rica with a deep love for poetry, superheroes and reading about fantasy worlds*



## **at first, the colours are bright - Prose**

**By Natasha Lim**

eyes wide, you take the plunge into this glittering new world with your hand in mine. our minds are clear and our hearts are full, ostensibly bound together by an intangible feeling. we give our all to this serendipitous connection, two beacons illuminating in the vast night. we are nothing but specks of dust in this universe, ready to become something more.

at first, the colours are bright. they are intriguing but never ensnaring; radiant but never blinding; speaking but never screaming. afraid of missing out on anything, you keep your eyes open and i take notes. we are courageous wanderers, brazenly going over the shades and hues this world has to offer, straying far but never from each other.

the iridescence of the world isn't enough for you – a cool breeze comes around and you transform it into a hurricane. its quiet destruction and unpredictable nature settle in your heart, and every piece of your once steady soul drifts away with the wild wind. but my roots refuse to budge, my daisy heart inflexible in the face of change. we are night and day, never meeting in the middle.

at last, when our colours no longer blend together and our skies clash on the horizon, you let go. i drift from our world and enter a new one, propelled by heartbreak and dreams of clean slates. here, there is not enough light to guide me out of the wilderness: shades of grey stalk my every move and stygian shadows permeate my dreamscapes, daring me to settle in the void you left behind. we were passionate artists, but i cannot find colour in a world without you.

*Natasha Lim is a 19 year old psychology student from Singapore with a strong passion for writing and helping others. Her writing has been published in platforms such as Potted Purple and Cathartic Youth Literary Magazine, with works forthcoming in other publications. In her spare time, she enjoys drinking copious amounts of coffee and reading books that make her cry.*

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