

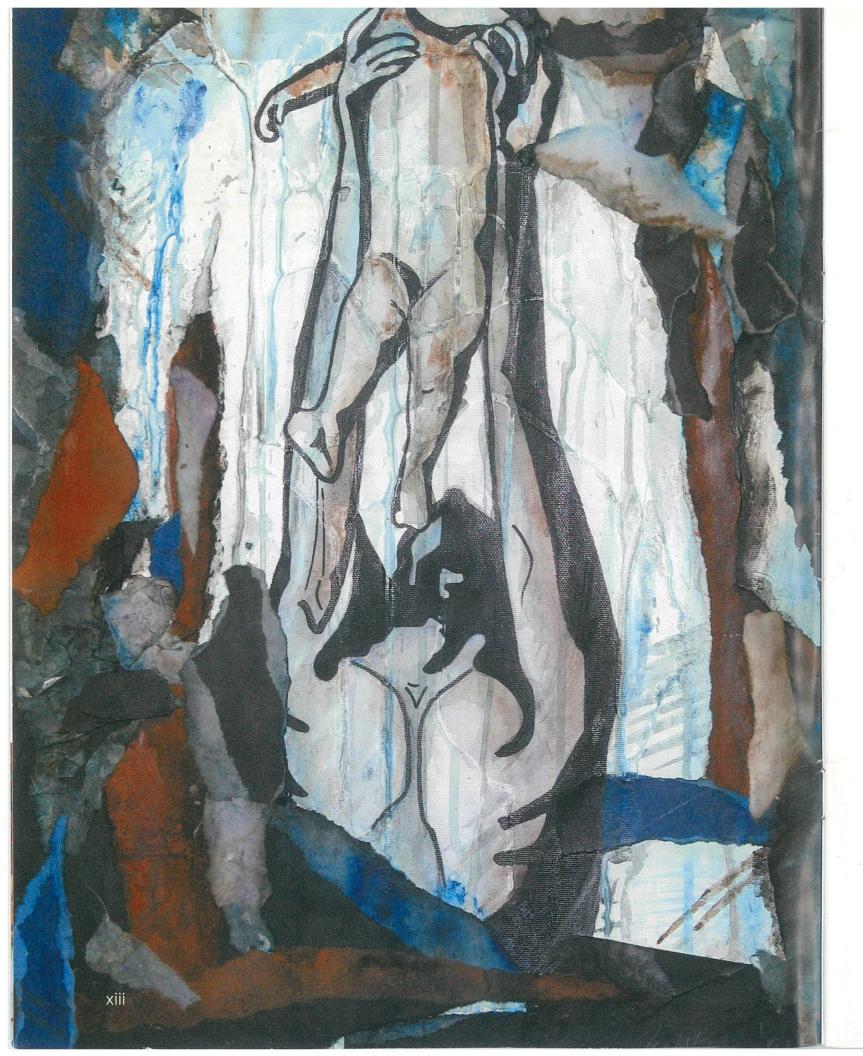


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Umbrage of Beauty By Ashley Seong

She stretches ahead, lanky limbs, and all legs, Masquerade incognita. An intangible aurora halos her Cimmerian face The beauty is masked, *Chiquita*

Never a pulse this stealthy cat-walker She flits knowing she's unattainable. My jaundiced eye will ever spite, This passive Venus posing on a pedestal

`Defy the world that sways in her midst, As she glides over the eyesore mass I tread on *her* towards a glaring reality She becomes but a shadow in my past.





A Fallen Woman By Ery Shin

A great longing for the unknown filled her. She trembled, furious. "How dare you presume to judge me! Unethical indeed! If I was wretched before, I'm ruined now! A fallen woman!" Choking with rage, the woman fell to her feet and broke down into a pathetic delirium of tears and uneven sobs—sweat congealing. She battered the floor with her delicate fists.

"Shut up," the man growled. "I've had enough. You won't get a cent from me, you greedy bitch." With those words, he strode forward and slapped her with his hairy hands that smelled of magnolia and tobacco. The black stench of fear and death pervaded the air as he pummeled her relentlessly. Finally, weary, he stopped. She lay, battered on the cement, her legs perpendicular to her hips. Like a broken bird with lacerated wings, she looked frail and defeated. And her crying made her seem old and ugly. Above all, her incessant trembling irritated him the most.

"Want my money, eh? Screw another man and now divorce?" The man was implacable. Inconsolable. "The hell with you. I loved you, I did. More than that damn imbecile ever will. Don't even want to know his name," he whispered. A gloomy silence followed, gathering above the man's brows as he brooded sullenly. Then, an idea struck him. A slow, solemn smile spread over his face and his complexion regained some of its original vitality.

He leaned over and gracefully crushed her windpipe with a single twist of his fleshy fingers, all covered in rings. She let out a strangled cry before going limp, eyes glazed. A dumb, ox-like expression contorted her otherwise passable features, profound in its deep suffering. Death did not become her. Her still form emanated the surge of all that is futile and weak, helpless and almost lethargic in its passivity.

Musing over the tragic end to his love, he gently stripped the woman and removed her wedding ring and other jewels adorning her reedy, birdlike body. The corpse was beginning to stiffen. After folding her clothes and meticulously washing her twisted limbs, he proceeded to eat her, tearing at her flesh with his bare hands and filed teeth. Of course, he removed his glasses and suit before beginning this next-to-impossible feat, for he disliked the thought of her blood, anyone's blood, dirtying his clothes—especially his starched and ironed white shirt.

Her flesh was not supple nor yielding nor tender to the taste. Yet still, he continued to claw his way through her viscera and swallow what she offered, albeit unwillingly. It took almost the entire night to devour her. "Tough old bitch," he muttered gleefully. At last, he successfully consumed the last of her remains and leaned back, sticky but content. Her teeth, nails, hair, and bones were laid to rest at the bottom of his feet. Similarly, other portions deemed inedible were promptly ignored. There he lay, submerged in a seemingly endless puddle of dried brown blood, placated at last and resembling a heavy woman with child, belly swollen.

Finally, after an eternity of savage yawns and sighs, the man rolled over and got to his feet. He washed himself and cleared away the debris, the brittle remnants of

woman, his skinny, ungrateful woman who resembled more of a widow or nun than a proper wife. He was firmly convinced that he had done his duty, no more, no less. Yet a shadow flitted across his face. "Crap, I'm hallucinating. That spot on the floor can't be getting bigger." Even as he spoke, the stain on the floor, her blood, was growing, rapidly expanding as the seconds passed and elapsed.

Wrinkling his nose, he coughed nervously. Suddenly, a gripping pain lanced through him. His stomach convulsed and pulsated furiously, pure agony drumming through his loins and lower belly. His skin throbbed and his fear accumulated in the form of sweet-smelling perspiration. "Ah, gods, I'm dying," he moaned with the despair of a wraith exposed to the living. Bile filled his mouth, tears blurred his vision, and he died, retching simultaneously, almost in a coordinated movement. The doctors, later examining his body, declared the cause of his death to be "indigestion and heartache."



A Prayer Unable to Reach Heaven By Michael Kim

I don't know where you are or if you can hear me at all I don't know if you can notice me or if you even care

I probably shouldn't be talking to you being a pagan and all Still I see your face and hope you can hear my prayer

> God help my people shadowed by fear Show them the mercy withdrawn from them

God help the torn and the wretched Give them comfort they can't find on Earth

God help the blind covered by foolishness
Teach them wisdom when they know only lies

God help the outcast, lost, and destitute Embrace them if you can

God help us all for no one cares

I don't pretend to understand why some are blessed and some are not

Why the few you seem to grace

Why they can invoke your name and we cannot

I thought we are all children of God - Perhaps I'm wrong

A meek voice

A helpless child

A small cry

A song too faint

A prayer unable to reach Heaven...

Ugly Duckling
by Tim Chang

You're like an ugly duckling
With delusions from dusk till dawn
You sit back and you dream about
The day you'll be a swan
With graceful wings and color
So beautiful yet so blind
Even now you're wondering
When you'll walk around with pride
And you'll go on never trying
And your dreams will go amuck
You'll grow up and realize
You're just an ugly duck





Crushed and Grounded By Ashley Seong

Catch me swiftly

Your arms detain my waist

It's my weak ankles

They're always threatening to break

Vacant eyes,

Aren't I a passive wisp of laughter?

I'll vanish lest I float beside you

Behind, I mean, to hold me grounded after

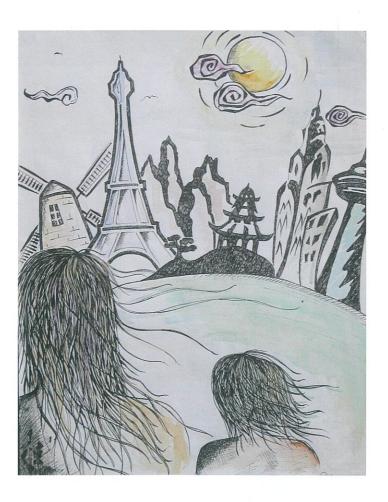
Mornings On Thayer Street By Deena F

Delightfully and blissfully, a musician stands around the corner of a brownish red rust brick building of a café. A successor of performance, he bends down again after a short period of serene relaxation to pick up the saxophone with a history of two generations. Each button he presses, the melodies of precious moments are transformed into a tranquility waves of rhythm and blues. He soothes the instrument as always, and the surface contour his gentle fingertips; the same fingers that push the subway ticket through the machine. It was his job to play music.

He stands in front of the café, glancing at the window, yearning for a cup of morning latte. As if boss told him to get back to work, he quickly turns around and puts the old worn out black strap around his black neck. Gently tapping his foot, his eyes close, performing the music from his memory. The music plays an intense sound of alleviation for his protest. His protest of his life.

This musician is about a street away from where I sit every morning at seven, sipping my white chocolate mocha, flipping through my daily paper. A permanent attire, he wears a white, sleeveless shirt and dark blue jeans, long enough to cover up his ankle, every day. His white socks lead into the muddy looking, ivory shoes – the shoes that seem to follow train tracks or an old walk bridge or a steep hill. After examining what he is wearing from a distance, I look at myself. I'm wearing my usual Armani suit, my Rolex watch and have with me the briefcase my wife bought me for our first Christmas together. I suddenly remember the twelfth Christmas I celebrated with my family. That was the worst Christmas I will look upon for the rest of my life.

I wasn't an affluent businessman from the beginning. I grew up in the ghetto where black families lived together poorly and devastatingly. Yet my parents constantly showed their affection, which substituted for the hole of unsatisfactory and depression. I had an older brother who was handicapped by both his sights. Perhaps that is why we grew up to share a secure relationship. I was his supporter, his eyes, his brother and his best friend – probably his only friend. As we grew older, our relationship was divided after my mother passed away on Christ-



mas Eve. The very next day was celebrated at the hospital...hoping that everything was merely a nightmare I had to be awakened from. My father suffered from great depression and later committed suicide. All my childhood, I was lost for words. I thought the only way to live was to have a stable job, to support my brother and myself with money and live happily ever after all. So I worked. And worked. I studied assiduously without differentiating day and night. Now, here I am, the graduate class of '96 from Wharton's Business School of U Penn. I remember when I received a letter confirming a full scholarship. I ran back home to share the good news with my brother. I found my brother leaning on the wall, sitting on his bed, listening to the radio through his earphones. He looked so abandoned, so lost yet he did not look sad or showed any sign of misery. I was jealous of him. I had, in front of me, my future, and I wanted more. I wanted everything to myself. My ignorant and imprudent personality made the turning point of my life. I turned away from him and walked out of the house. Forever. I didn't want to take care of any blind guy because fate had drawn me into a bigger future, indeed, a better life. From that day on Christmas became some type of abysmal ritual for me. I never celebrated, until I met my wife...

I open my eyes and sigh. "Nightmares..." I thought out loud. I went back on reading trying to obliterate the stains of my past. I stop again to sip the last portion of my coffee. I glance across the street again. The music had stopped. He looked tired. The people on the street are rushing here and there busily to catch up with time. The musician has a plastic container in front of him. As the light shoves itself through the container, the light is reflected through the walls, and from where I am sitting, the container looks empty. I've heard the sweet melodies flow into my ears every morning since I moved to Rhode Island. He seems happy all the time. There are people who watch him and applaud, and he would always appreciate it. He would politely start talking to them. Many times, the laughter from the audience would stop me from reading the paper. Some days, he wouldn't come out and do his job. That's when the café becomes a noisy cave. People start to talk about all sorts of things about the musician. Once I was sitting next to an old lady inside the café.

She said, "That saxophone player is probably having some problems again."

"Why? What's wrong with him?" I asked out of curiosity.

"People say he moves from street to street to capture a precise visual image of the neighborhoods. Then...when the clock strikes whatever many times for companies to close doors, he comes back and robs shops... and he never appears again in that neighborhood."

"How much does he take?"

"That's what I want to know. I heard that he doesn't steal monetary wealth. He looks for photo albums, pictures and picture frames..." The old lady gave out a small smirk. "He's a peculiar gentleman and who knows where he comes from...Mars?? Hahaha."

As I reflect the conversation with the old lady, I examine this man again from the distance. I decide that I should contribute to his job. I throw away my cup, fold the newspaper and stick it in my briefcase. I stand up and the hot sunlight later over my eyes. Putting on my classy sunglasses, I walk closer to the saxophone player. I get a more defined look at his figure. As I wait for the traffic light to turn green, he bends down and shakes the plastic container, which is not yet filled with money. I cross the street and come closer to him. He shakes his container and several pennies and nickels rattle against the walls. I open my black leather wallet. I see a picture of my wife and our baby daughter. I smile. Looking inside the Big Pocket, I take out a dollar and as I do that, an old picture of my dead parents and brother fall on the ground with the buck. I stop and look for it, taking off my shades. I find it quickly, and see it lying at the foot of the saxophone player. I pick it up and stand. He is still squatting down, facing the wall, and fixing something on his sax. It wouldn't hurt to greet him with the dollar, I thought, and if lucky, I can ask him about the rumors.

"Hi," I say, smiling.

"Hello!" he friendly replies and turns around.

"How ar..." My voice collapse. My fingers drop the dollar and the picture.

l walk away

I can hear him ask around 'hello?'. But I walk with feelings full of guilt and shame.

He is my brother.

When a Dream Dies by Sandy Choe Everyone needs their own tomorrow Not just the day that will come after this one But that sliver of golden hope that glitters under brightness That keeps you going day after day And keeps you from smelling the stench of a rotting reality But sometimes that dream is not meant to be, Shattered by a brazen and lonely girl Shattered before it has a chance to become a beautiful picture in your mind So put your dream away And later shoot it Soundless and quick At the place in the back where the head and neck meet While your hand is shaking, shaking with fear and sorrow "Never you mind. A guy's got to sometimes." Fold it away in the white shroud of your murdered innocence, Fold it away in the eaves of your memory where it will never again be sought for Forget that it ever existed And sit forlorn at a table in a dimly lit room Tipping back a beer that could never have tasted so bitter and black and horrible But you don't even notice it Because you no longer care When a dream dies, spurting acid and phlegm weakly on its deathbed Even if it was as futile as the wings of Icarus I weep and bemoan miserable fortune Because it was the ultimate grasp of straw I was clinging to In a time when I had nothing else

Genesis by Jennie Choe

...for dust you are, and to dust You shall return...

Clay That's all I am But look The mud is drying Cracking in the cruel blaze Of a roaring kiln A scorched mass Of imperfection Broken By the hardness in the heart The iron rod down the back Ready to be thrown away But He lovingly puts me aside With the others Until one day my tears Will turn clay into flesh



Somewhere in between the Sun and the Stars... By David Park

somewhere in between the sun and the stars. I found you, waiting for me in your flower print dress and your seven dollar sandals. your windswept hair and the scent of the hot sand and the sound of the restless ocean tides surrounded what I had missed for so long, your familiar radiance, which warms my heart as the sun warms my skin. I found you, a smile that was visible from a mile, standing on wooden planks that creaked with every step I took. I embraced you so hard, as if to confirm that you were no hallucination of my love-craved mind, my love-craved being. it hurt when I realized how long you waited there, in between the sun and the stars, wondering when this moment would come. my eyes let free drops of relief, of homecoming, of love. after a separation which sapped away my reasons for breathing one by one, I found you there, waiting patiently. waiting for me.

> that night we reunited... you told me something I had not expected. you came to see me, not to see me but to tell me that time had worn Us out. our relationship died in that time that was lost and another man had bumped me down on her list of love's labors. that night I returned home tired from the journey, too tired to let her words sink into my heart and rot there. yet I cried myself to sleep. the moon lay high in the silvery sky. and let beams of its light drop loose over my windswept curtains, the scent of my tear-dried face, the sound of a broken heart, angels watched me as I lay... dreaming of how she waited for me in between the sun and the stars.

> > twice I cried for her that day, tears of lost and found.

Choose Your Poison By Philip Chang

Today

Someone had a bullet tear open his muscle fibers like piano strings, Shatter his bone like a dropped base. Pierce the soft flesh of his bowels and bleed to death. And you need to go cop that next fix.

Today.

Someone's drinking up the dregs of society in a gutter, Wearing the cheap, rank odor of last night's woes across his shirt. And you need to swig away your woes.

Today.

Someone lost his job, his home, his soul, his family, his life, his fame, He's been brutally shoved back to the streets' maw, caged in desperation. And you need to try on that Armani.

Today.

Someone's been broken by the raging hail of oppressive superiority, There's nowhere to go but out, but out means wandering eternally in darkness. And you need to rebel with no cause in mind.

Today.

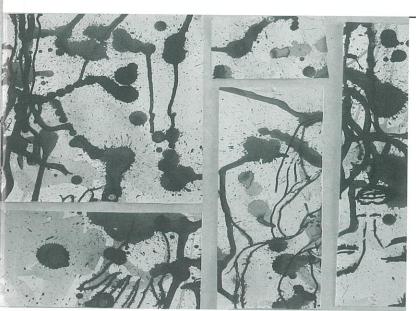
Someone can see his ribs against skin that barely holds his bowels, He lives in perpetual delirium as the flies have their way with his exposed frame. And you need to complain to the waiter.

Today.

Someone changes his outlook on life and paints a new picture, He knows he's imperfect and far from finding what he wants to, But he knows he's trying to go beyond convenience and convention.

Today.

That someone can be you.



By Minsu Han

Here I join the ranks of other angry people around the world

Left damaged

Left used

Left hurt

There on that street, that night, place and time You were left fumbling for your dignity and yourself You were left open like a pocket of feelings Incomplete, unfulfilled, very lacking Because you couldn't hold it in Force it down Instead, spilling all that precious sickness

That was flooding you from the inside out.

Just Fly
by Jennifer Bahk

She fingered the railing tentatively, feeling it's cold steel. She laughed nervously at a joke that was not said. Her eyes darted frantically looking for someone, anyone to acknowledge. Her brown hair flew behind her as a warm gush of air surrounded her whispering, "fly, fly". Who was she? Was she her cK shirts, AIX skirts, and DKNY shoes? Was she the house, which supposedly defined her achievements? Was she her car, which supposedly declared her accomplishments? Her peers coveted her diamond engagement ring, her mother boasted of her daughter's Ivy League diploma, and her fiancé bragged of her beauty. But she had descended further into confusion. She was winning a race, which could not be won.

They say that before you die, your whole life flashes before you. For her, the past 24 hours seemed like the only life that she had been living. Her engagement ring lay in the hands of a homeless man, her car sat on bottom of the ocean and all her clothes were burning slowly in the stomach of trashcan. She had splashed water in the face of her boss and told him he was a bastard straight to his face. Now she was jobless, homeless, fiancé-less and very alone. But at that moment, when despair was knocking on the door of her sanity, she was liberated. She took off her dress that was too tight and her shoes that were too loose and stepped onto the railing. It was at this moment, that humanity reached its zenith and she was the goddess of the world. With the grace of a falcon, she opened her arms and flew.

"It is only after you have lost everything, that you are free to do anything." Other Side by Hansel Yoon

It's all I ever had
All I could ever claim was my own
Separation
Ensnaration, redemption
Foolish human mistakes, incapacity of thought
Panic, terror, blinding, searing, seeking
The only way out
The only path left to take, the only river to cross, the final barrier

Gaze, if you will, upon the rivers
Styx, Cocytus, Pyriphlegethon, Archeron, Lethe
Take my hand
Let's go
Let's pierce the veil of the shadowed planes of existence
Let's do it now, let's get to that place now

Affirmation
Determination
Building the rafts upon which travel shall be made possible
Yet I know I am cursed, the ferryman barring my path
His eyes—smoldering with disapproval
Taciturn old man
Unmoving patience
So be it

Stiffly upon the banks, I sit
With sudden revulsion, I heave the tolls of construction, my face distorted with hate
I will thee
with my last breath, I will push at thee
Go, the other side awaits
It's there, everything that has been rightfully denied, all that thou hast loved and hated
The bath—I fill with the waters of the rivers of the other side—has no bottom
A vain attempt to fill the bath with the clouded, corrupted waters
A vain attempt to cleanse my demon soul
The fire inside is nothing when it comes to your salvation, your crossing of the rivers

Fare thee well, young hybrid, young mortal Hidden away, in a grove of leafless trees, I make my sanctuary knowing that thou hast crossed the river The harps mourn beautifully, my Orpheus to thy Euridice Circumlocutions
by Stephanie Oh

The rod-like device or contrivance often associated with words and a certain colored liquid, usually blue or black and taken grip of in either the right or left of what follows the termination of the arm, is said to impose greater power than the object used for fighting or defense which has a slight hilt by which it is held and an extended part that has the purpose of shearing or severing.

[the pen is mightier than the sword]

It is forewarned that one should not be hasty in releasing glandular liquid containing a substantial concentration of the natural, white, crystalline compound used to flavor food in response to the unfortunate but immutable loss, due to a falling action, of the lactic substance found

neither in a solid nor gaseous state and which is secreted by female mammals for the purpose of feeding their young.

[don't cry over spilled milk]

The area spanned with living entities known to find ways to feed themselves by means of consuming water and

being exposed to ultraviolet rays of the burning yellow ball of gas far in the distance, that in turn are also the most ample sources of food for the family bovidae, is constantly found to be in a more brilliant shade of the hue composed of blue and yellow when growing in that which is different or beyond a bounding line.

[the grass is always greener on the other side]

JAZZ NIGHT AT THE CAFÉBy Philip Chang

It was Jazz night at the café Ambiance swirling like café lattes Mixed with cinnamon sticks cats sipped on that and cancer sticks Or whatever else made their mood lift And drift upon a silent mocha daze Infused with the plunking slap bass Which makes, a slow haze so funky, It leaves most with a bad case of slapped face Shakespeare to Stan Getz (Wow) Hughes-infused-Hancock (Imagine that) Dante dubbed with Les Brown (Hmm...) Rostrand and a little Brubeck (Could work?) Or we could just get down, to this sound Unfiltered by critical obsidian lenses Or some tight-knit charcoal turtle-neck That constricts the biggest and best And lets you express the inferior rest Forget the calming effects of your cigarette The only serum I need is inside of this pen To get what I need to express off of my chest Listen to this muffled trumpet's throaty moans

So as I stand under this dusty light that groans

With a tendency to glare like chopper patrols So as I stand in front of this rusty microphone

With a tendency to squawk like 5-0 megaphones

And this dude drips blue from the tip of his saxophone

And these fingers strum classics from the gramophone

I take it nice and slow, off the top of the dome.

Your Music By Alex Paik

I revel in your voice, voluptuous cloud in the sky

Rich, filling my mind, yet ever so delicate Responding at the hint of music As it permeates your ears

Wafting its way down to your chest As if you breathe the music and exhale a sweeter form

That passes through your parted lips as you sing

No.

It is impossible to define what you do
In merely auditory terms, for
Never has song curled its hand around my

Pulled me close in its embrace Gentle, yet firm in presence within my arms Its distinct scent intoxicating in such a heavenly way

Leaving-all-too-soon.

All too slowly.

Fading

ever

so

slightly.

And never has song left me in such agony My ears yearning for milder closure.

The Pitiful Death By Tim Chang

"Don't take life too seriously, you'll never escape it alive"
-Elbert Hubbard

The door was clearly locked. I had trapped myself into the bathroom and my parents had gone on a vacation. They would be back in a week. I always wondered why our bathroom door had the locks on the outside. I figured it was a mistake made by the construction workers but our family never fixed it. I stood there with my eyes fixed on the doorknob and my jaw wide open. Frantically I began to rattle the doorknob but I knew it was useless. This door was made out of metal and the only way I would be able to open it was if I had a blowtorch handy. My cell phone was outside and the bathroom was basically soundproof.

I began to scream and shriek hoping that perhaps a random passer-by would hear me. Sometimes, people would walk across to deliver a package, or post an advertisement. I even thought maybe the sound vibrations would break open the door. I knew deep inside that it was useless but I didn't know what else to do. I jumped up and down, trying to slam my feet to the floor to make loud noises but the ground was rock solid. There was no way the neighbor downstairs would be able to me. I finally stopped screaming and jumping up and down. The bathroom didn't have anything except a bathtub, soap, shampoo, towels, tissue boxes, toothbrushes, and a medicine cabinet. My hands were trembling as if I was getting electrocuted and I didn't know how to keep control of myself. I just couldn't accept that I would the in this God-forsaken bathroom. I quickly brought out the towels and laid them on the bathtub. I rolled a couple of towels together to make a pillow. I planned to sleep in the bathtub when I got tired. There was nothing around to eat but there was plenty of tab water. I realized that I would have to eat soap if I got desperate. My stomach got butterflies and I wanted to vomit.

A spontaneous rage came into me and I threw everything there was in the bathroom towards the door. I threw my toothbrushes, my medicine jars, and the shampoo bottles. I actually began pulling out tissues from the tissue box and threw them at the door. The tissues lost momentum, stopped, and slowly floated down to the ground. When I realized what I was doing, I put down the box of tissues and stopped. For a second, I thought I went mad.

I regained composure and sat on the toilet seat thinking of something I could do. I realized that I could make soap sculptures and maybe draw on the mirrors with the soap to keep myself busy. I realized that none of these options were rational and began to feel even more pitiful. To calm myself, I decided to lay in the bathtub to fall asleep.

When I awoke, I hoped that I slept for 10 hours but I could still see light from the outside through the tiny crack beneath the door; I hadn't slept for anymore than a couple of hours. Once again, the mixture of feelings came back and my stomach began to hurt. It growled at the same time because I was hungry. I wasn't used to not eating for anymore than 6 hours. My throat was dry and I decided to drink the tap water. Feeling sick, I bent over the sink and took a sip of the water that was flowing down the faucet. When my thirst was quenched, I decided to just lay on the bathtub.

I wanted to get out of this bathroom. I really didn't want to die. I began to get angry at my parents for leaving me in my house alone.

"What were they thinking!" I thought. However, it wasn't long before I began to realize that it was me who convinced them that I didn't need any babysitter to take care of me. It wasn't long before I began to blame myself. "The irony god's must be rolling on the floor," I thought to myself. I began to ponder about my friends and social life at school. I was a senior with my whole life ahead of me and I was trying to apply to bunch of Ivy League Colleges but my scores didn't seem to cut it. My counselor was against the idea of applying to top ranked schools but I decided to apply anyway. People considered me an 'edge student' because of my grades. Although I was lazy and never studied hard, I still wanted to go to a top college.

I thought about my friends. I wondered what they were doing. I suddenly began to hope that perhaps one of them would call me and realize something was wrong when they couldn't get hold of me. But then I realized that none of them ever call. My friends were more like acquaintances. I suddenly regretted all of this. Life is supposed to be all about relationships and which I seemed to have overlooked.

I remember in middle school when my best friend and I would always hang out. We were always there for each other. We'd call everyday and talk about the girls we liked. We thought we would die for each other. One time, my best friend and I were playing football in the house. I accidentally tripped while playing and broke a vase. It was my mother's favorite and I knew my mother would punish me severely. When she stepped in, my friend said it was his entire fault and took all the blame. He later told me that he knew my mother couldn't get too mad at him since he was someone else's child but we both knew that his own mom would punish him later. Thinking about it now, I had taken him for granted. As we entered high school, we became total strangers and I basically forgot about everything he had done for me. I wondered if he ever still thought about me.

After a while, I wondered what would happen if I died right here in the bathroom. My parents reactions would be dramatic. But then again the news would go around and it would be hilarious. I actually laughed while thinking about the news reports that would circle the globe about the most pitiful death. It's just so funny.

When I stopped giggling to myself, my mind had cleared and I was looking up at the ceiling. I thought about God. I didn't really believe in him and I suddenly wished I had. This experience would be a lot less scary with something to look forward to after death. I was scared out of my wits but if I had God I wouldn't be. I had always been a rational person, and only believed in what I could see. Deep inside, I knew there was a divine being up there but I chose not to believe in him. I wanted to be in control of my own life and here I was not even being able to get out of the bathroom. I was locked in this bathroom, my mind was so concentrated on the success of my own life, money, power, fame and all those worldly things. I cared about such useless goals and temporary pleasures. The truth was even though I was locked in the bathroom, I was also locked in my own life as well. I had believed that I was controlling my own life and doing the things I wanted to but that had been an illusion. Desire for these worldly pleasures was what was controlling my life. The whole truth about my life was falling down on me in this bathroom. My life had been so useless and I had been worshiping superficial idols and not caring about the genuinely important things. The realization was so sudden. I was suddenly glad that I had gotten locked into this bathroom. I would have time to make everything up to God. Perhaps the time wasn't too late and he would forgive me for my immature deeds. I would have time to finally not care about such external and artificial objects. I saw things so clearly. Perhaps this wasn't the most pitiful thing that could happen after all. Those feelings of despair, fear and grief had been washed away and I was enlightened. I believed this was all part of the plan.

I got up and leaned on the door real hard. I was crying but not out of sorrow. I was crying because I was happy. I leaned on the door harder and harder because I was crying so much. People say miracles don't occur anymore. I disagree. As I leaned on the door, the little lock must have pulled out somehow. I heard a little click, and suddenly the door opened. I stood there with that same contorted expression I had when I had locked myself in. The door was broken and all I had to do was lean on it to get it to open. I saw the clock to see that I had only been stuck in the bathroom for maybe one hour. I walked to the refrigerator, took out a sandwich and ate it. Then I picked up my SAT books and threw them out the window. I took out my Bible and put it on top of my desk so I could read it later. Then I got dressed and went for the door.

"Life is different, for he who has touched death" -Anonymous

Don't
By Katherine Oh

Pain.
I've felt it.
Tears.
I've cried them.
Suffering.
I've been through it.

I don't need you to tell me it'll be okay
I don't need you to tell me you know how it feels
I don't need you to tell me it takes time to heal

What if the pain never goes away? What if the tears are eternal? What will you tell me then?

Happy Poem
By Candice Kim

You tried to act so cool and carefree
You wanted the attention
But now I know your secret
That soon will be revealed to the world
It's okay that you have
A very shiny and big bald spot
On the back of your head
But please, next time, make sure
That your wig is put on securely
And never lands near my feet again.

my fingers nimbly reach for...the smooth, clean surfaces...an emotion of unity, a sense...flows through my arms...through all of me...a connection is made...now they rest patiently...seemingly useless against...the white and black hues... suddenly mind links with hands...and heart links with sound...and the flow begins...a picture is worth a thousand words...this feeling is worth a million...as the notes are painted on the canvas of melody...I am rejoicing, rejoicing...the brilliant, unexplainable, indescribable...sound in the air...it is heaven...eyes closed, smile wide...as I let the connection flow through me...around me... within me...the feeling of utter bliss...

By Jenny Lee

Have You Ever... By David Park

have you ever cried so hard

that you were afraid you would suffocate on the tears that wouldn't come out and you didn't care about being ashamed, or how ridiculous you looked heaving in chunks of air that could come in smaller breaths, your body curled up into its own lightless world? once you've gone that far...nothing matters anymore, and the only thing that you can do is let your body flush out the pain.

have you ever taken a bath

and felt like you got lost in a distant planet of warm sensations an isolated place...

where problems are illegal and hedonists thrive off of heat and blurred imagery where time does not exist, but people finish what they want to finish regardless try immersing your ears under the bath water...

it will block out any bothersome thoughts or worries.

and it will filter out the noise of life...

so you can concentrate on the one, constant sound that drives your body forward: your heart beating currents of life through your relaxed, heat-soaked body. one loses track of time when the time is measured in heart beats.

one more moment spent in the company of your heart is

one more step towards unlocking nirvana.

you let your face sink enough so that the water seeps into the corner of your eyes...

and when you open them you have to squint because the eyelashes have been matted down with the weight of water, and the bathroom lights seem like stationary fairies that decorate a linoleum heaven...

you've never seen a bathroom so beautiful...

you've never realized how hard it is to escape the pressure of life...

once you've had enough of living in a liquid dream...life seems difficult, but you know you must press onwards, collecting each happy moment and placing them neatly into the basket of your memory...

have you ever driven through a rainstorm

and watched as the droplets run across your car window in beautiful rivulets...

some droplets colliding into others, and forming larger globs of water which move downward with faster momentum...collecting drips here and drops there, while catapulting towards its final destination of the window's corner.

some make it this far...while others cannot stand the velocity of wind and machine and they give up, letting go of the window's friction and flying off into the gray sky.

the cycle repeats until the clouds are tired of sacrificing their bodies...

have you ever kept yourself awake at night

twirling your brain around a concept so irresistible,

that it transcended the importance of sleep.

so important that it overcame your instincts to lie awake in the dark,

and instead you turned on the light to write down this ingenious idea which has enslaved the focus of your thought. despite the knowledge that you must wake up in four hours,

and despite the objection of your biological clock...

this thought is so precious that it triumphs over all of these natural constructs

so that it won't be replaced by a meaningless dream...

it is an uncalled for satisfaction.

have you ever taken air for granted... while drowning in a sea of work.

After After-Prom by Ashley Seong

She creeps through the window,
With soiled clothes and swollen feet
Limp hair and runny make up
The rose has succumbed to atrophy

Its futile baptizing her fragile frame for She's beyond revival, nix consolation
The scarlet bud is hanged before
The promising bloom of adulation

Left to wither in the dry night wind
The rose looks at the ground, hung to dry
And slips from the grasp of the pin
And whispers down like the wings of a dragonfly

All traces of velvet have evaporated

Just a vestige of the symbol she portrayed – his heart

Lying on the floor next to the wrinkled dress

She's trampled and scattered in the wind with disregard





Every Morning by Alex Lee

I close my eyes and see
My entire universe coming down on me.
I clench my fists as I twist and turn
The stygian night sky to accompany me.
I open my eyes with a fear stricken heart,
Staring into that abysmal universe,
Hoping, dreaming
That there's something out there for me.
The fuliginous night sky,
The brilliant blues, reds, and yellows of
the stars above,
Like an oxymoron painted across the
heavens.
I can only stare awhile
Only then to close my eyes

Only then to close my eyes

To return to my shattering universe;
 My redefined paradise.
 A phantasmagoria of thought,
 A kaleidoscope of epiphany,
 I don't sleep a single second;
 I don't miss a single thought.
 My mind is spinning

And I wish it would simply stop.
 Tortured by thoughts abundant,
 I lie there.

Silence screaming in my ears,
Reality weighing down on my shoulders,
Not a single wink do I sleep.
My eyes swelling with forsaken tears,
"Just one second...won't you please?
Be my sandman for just a moment,
So I can close my eyes and fall asleep?"
I open my eyes in disbelief.
Thoughts pounding against my head.
But upon touch of the cold, stolid floor,

It stops.
Without thought.
Without emotion.
I carry out my routine...
A soulless entity.

Prometheus' Song by Leia Doran

I.

Sometimes, when the eagle is asleep,
And my liver rests, whole, inside my belly,
I think that I did right
To steal the hoarded Gold of the Gods,
To warm, with yellow tongues,
The fingers of Man

Today, I looked down to the Earth, Full of sweet, scurrying things, Wrapped Trapped, Alive,

And I knew that I was right-

Shh... The eagle is stirring.

My gift has been tamed, Changed,

Deranged.

Life begets Death

Sudden heat, then eternal, impenetrable cold The eagle, all soft feathers and hard talons

Tears my flesh.

My blood on the rocks.

The world pulsates.

I Am Content by Jennifer Kim

I am content
For all is done
All is over with
No anger remains
No bitter regrets
I am content
For love is
Just a word
nothing else.
You have proved it so.

I am content
What was once torn
has been restored,
sharpened,
and in shape.
I am content
I don't care
About the past
I am about
The present.
I am about
The future.
I am through
With what ways I had.
I am content

By Stephanie Hodges

A simple wish for something, something I really shouldn't mention, It haunts my thoughts and opens my eyes to the limits I can't pass.

If only I could dance,

Dance until my heart can softly beat in the rhythm with the world itself, With singing winds and crashing waves.

I can't hold it all.

If I could sing, I would sing until my voice was gone,
Sing sweet songs that keep my eyes from closing from one lifetime to the next.

I put my life upon my self when in fact,

It's not my own.



A Mother's Farewell By Duaa Khalid

Seek out the wondrous world but beware for danger lurks and walks the same paths.

Breathe fresh air, play, run but watch out for the giant spiders under the hill.

Smile a thousand times, yet warn yourself against the gloom, which settles in.

> Go, live, be free, don't cling on to me, I will not always be here.

Is There Something
By Philip Chang

If you think you have something worth living for, Why do you cower under the gaze of carnivores, Will you die for the ideals of a just cause, Or will you die without ideals, kinda just cuz? Do y'all got what it takes, to take what I got? Cuz some cats claim my bragging rights are overrated, But ain't it so that I'm rated over most cats that brag? I love my cause like the prophet love Khadejia, I love my cause like Christians sing to Jesus, I love my cause like little kids dig Santa. If you feel like you have something worth living for, Whether it be raiding the stores or feeding the poor, Represent who you are, not who you want to be, Behind some phony mask, please exhibit you honestly. Masks are like rocking the frosted cross on your best, Cuz them dudes can't melt their frozen hearts and

See what's best in the worst change it if you upset.

Frozen River

By Alex Paik Each crystal of cold is stagnant, Just as the once gushing river I seek, Ebbs its flow from waters translucent Dappling confident waves down the creek, To shielding all depths of your soul Barring the emotions we swim in. I slip on this outer demeanor so cold And am slapped by your hardened feelings. Why I waited for these water opaque: Other bodies tease me ashore in tide. For you at the banks I stand yet I lack, You would never lap up to my side. But I had braved your waters to our delight. Now I hack the ice in hopes to find If what you want is time to thaw in light Or if waters washed away what I left behind. Perchance time be it. I will let it pass once more And soon seize it back lest I be forever forlorn.

Bottled Smiles
By Ashley Seong

I will stand in the midst of heavy limbs to consume, swallow
Ten seconds pause will I have then, peace lodged inside none too shallow,
And a small capsule will dissolve, shedding evergreen and gamboge rays;
And live alone till the potent lasts,
Inside a protective haze.

And then the world will stop its whirling, a hiatus in the eye,
Past noon I will tread the meridian,
within the jiva rise—
Bright lights will bleed, anointing me
with mirage-like visions of languor
And evening come the spirit fades
beckoning a renewal of vigor.

I will wake once again
Hollow, and reach for bottled smiles
Though I stand in a crowded hallway,
or face emptiness stretching miles
I will feel the weight lifted
the sensation—elevated among the clouds,
I feel it, the murmuring susurration within
that comes from flipping frowns.

Peter
By Jennie Choe

You were with him.

I don't know what you are talking about.

I watched them lead the lamb to the slaughter Chosen by a treacherous kiss I wanted to rip my own heart But fear strangled my tongue My road was foreordained

You're one of them.
I didn't even know him.

Why must we damn the purest
What makes us turn on the godly
But how can I follow him?
Death stands quietly beside me
I could reach out even now
Take his hand
If only I were strong enough

But you're a Galilean.
I've never seen him before.

His path is to the cross
I'm drowning in despair
I know what the nails can do
I can't face them

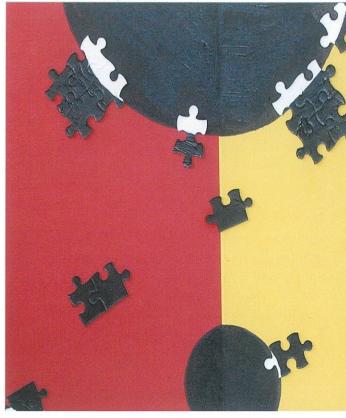
The sun burns away night's veil Like a razor on the horizon The cock crows A death knell Sounding my doom and his

Dear Lord forgive me.

...A Heavy Heart By David Park

I'd love to cut a hole in my mouth and let the poetry flow but that link to my brain is detached...unswitched, it will stay off until I bring myself back to a more comfortable reality where stress doesn't suffocate my brain and feelings of regret no longer haunt me. This cancer inside of me grows and creates space for itself behind my ribs - it crushes my heart and it blocks up my breathing and my appreciation of the passing minutes dies alongside my organ's resistance, no remedy has or will be invented but I can break down the barriers which hold down my soul with the power of God and with the power of apathy. I'm sick of going through each day without a droplet of motivation, I fail things consistently and have grown the habit of wasting potential - I could go far but from a million miles high, angels stroll down golden pathways and laugh at my internal struggle, while being as happy as I will be when I die - translated into the book of life from the book that is not life and will never be anything more than work, work, work and an occasional laugh...I wait indifferently for some freak accident or murder to usher my presence through an escalation of blindingly beautiful light; I can imagine my spirit's eyes squinting at sunspots that do not originate from the sun, but from celestial pockets which pepper Heaven's surface. I can imagine my spirit smiling the most honest smile that will ever grace its face, because it is then that I am drawn into the palace of the afterlife, and it is then that I will forget about me who is writing, about you who is reading, about people who try to grab my heart and bring it down to some miserable level. I wish that my surroundings would stop reading into me, stop learning into me. The devils are frustrated because even in my moments of hopelessness I hold onto God's sleeve as if my life depended on nothing else but the sustenance that emanates from His presence, and I suck it all in like a desperate child. Perhaps three hundred years in the future I will smile down at a boy who has faith but is frustrated, and ask God if I can bless him or do something to improve his fate. By then I will have shed all the stress that has accumulated on my patience like grime on dirty skin, or cholesterol that has slowly but surely blocked the passage of blood in the veins. I will have thrown off my chains violently, shaking free from the weights that have brought me down and down and down to the nature of menial work and the boring repetition that Earth provides. I will have ripped out the cancer that puts pressure on my depressed heart, and watch it be obliterated by holy light. I will be free that day. Free from all that makes my heart heavy.





Polaroid By Deena F

together we saunter along the edge of an ocean snapshot we trace four letters deep into the sand distant from the rigorous waves sliding unto the shore snapshot encircling our foundation we glance and I squint at the brightness his fragile eyes are reflecting me snapshot my five fingers shy away from his benign palms snapshot we sit on the creation and the sun at the horizon sings at our love with pink and purple snapshot he began to talk snapshot marry

Sandpaper

by Stephanie Oh

Me

I look down and see

The wind

The cold

The crisp

The rage

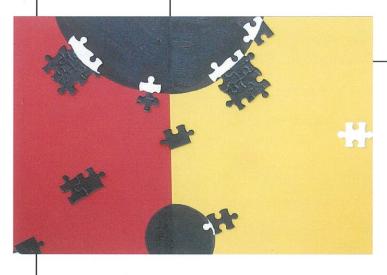
The crimson

The scarred violet

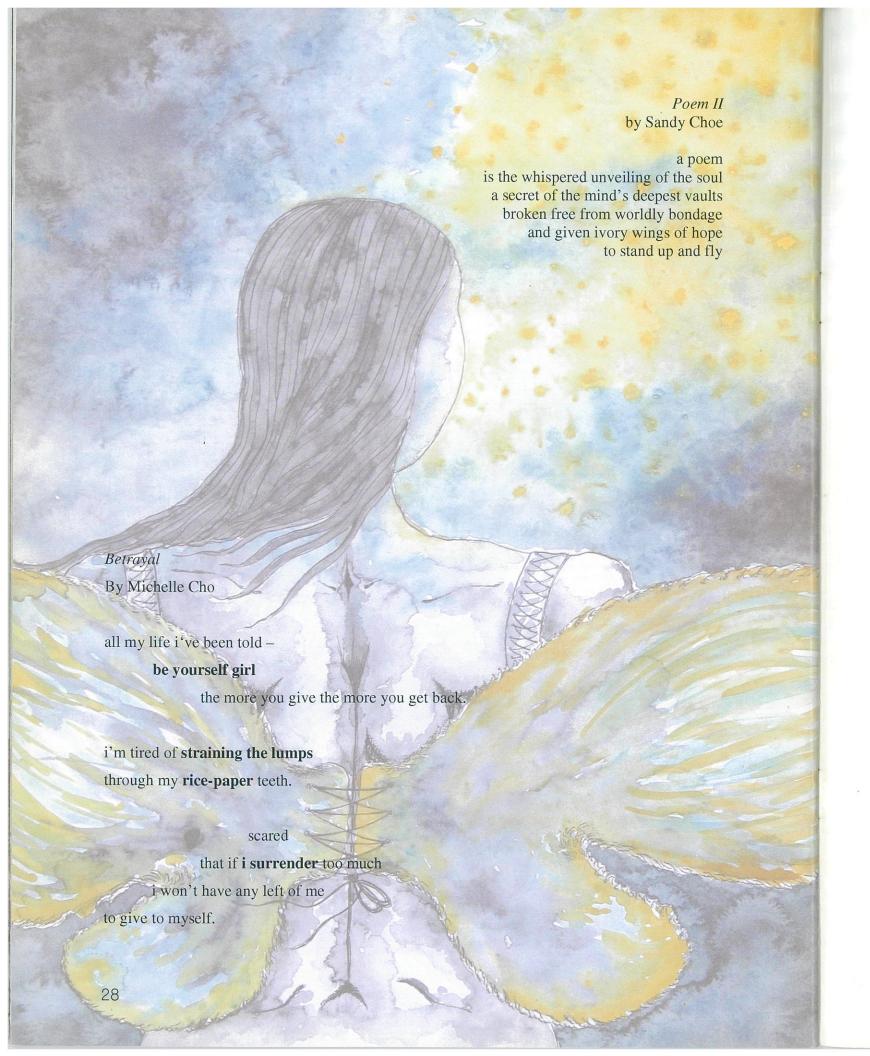
The rough

Me

And my sandpaper hands



snapshot me snapshot



Open Hands

By Leia Doran

Yesterday evening, I awkwardly maneuvered myself and my shopping bags into a gray taxi. After answering the typical perfunctory questions that all cab drivers seem to have ready to ask foreigners ("Where you from?" "Why you no speak Korean?") I settled back to endure twenty minutes of grueling Seoul traffic. All was well, despite deep suspicion that the cabbie was looking down my shirt in the rear view mirror. He kept up a one sided but enthusiastic conversation turning his head backwards at each stoplight to ask my opinion of the terrible canned music spewing from his radio.

Then we arrived at my house. Fumbling through the forest of plastic bags and paper wrappings surrounding me, I located ten thousand won and reached forward to place it in the Driver's waiting palm. I did a double take.

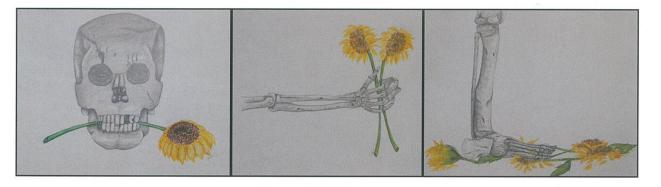
The Driver had no fingers.

Indeed, a palm was all there was to place my money in. Every finger except the thumb had been neatly severed, not even stumps or significant scarring to show where they had stood. His hand had the overall appearance of a short mitten, the thumb jutting awkwardly from the callused flesh of the palm.

I blinked and turned with a smile to hide my shock. I concentrated on extracting my luggage and myself from the cab, while Mr. Cabbie smiled sadly and knowingly. As I wheeled to shut the door, he pointed, with the only digit on his left hand, to his mutilated right hand.

"Factory."

And drove off into the night.



The Truth
By Tim Chang

I know that I'm late
I know that its time
There's nothing to fear
Time after time
It's already night
And I'm losing my mind
You don't have to cry
It's a beautiful day to say goodbye

s. t. o. n. e. s. by Jennifer Bahk

"I heard Paul's going to jail for beating up those two kids, could there be anyone more retarded?"

May the first one....

"Did you hear that Rebecca got an abortion over the weekend, she's such a slut"

who hath no sin...

"Oh my God, Peter got expelled because he was caught with pot He's so amazingly dumb"

cast the first stone...

Can Not Cry By Jordan Pappas

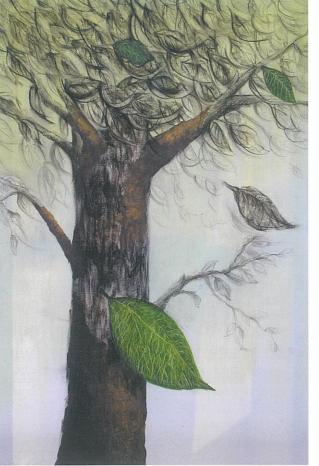
I think I've forgotten how to cry. Those weights you hooked to the lids of my Eyes Tore my tears. And now I've got a hollow mind I can weep. I can whine. I can shiver. But I can not cry. Pressing memories of daggers and guns And the sores that bleed and hurl To hell with 'em Once I can cry. I've lost my soul, (And everything in it) I gave it to you that day.

Sometimes I feel... By Duaa Khalid

Sometimes I feel like a diary, Sitting on a shelf Boring and ordinary from outside Yet unique from within, People write in me their worries And I faithfully listen Never criticizing, never judging Just quiet and silent. People scribble then erase Open their inner secrets to me, Who they hate, who they like... Quite a burden for poor old me. But I faithfully listen, Never criticizing, never judging. For I am a diary alone on a shelf.







Trashing the town Looking around Smokers with lazy eyes Flimsy dudes getting high on drugs The messed up hustlers Muttering senseless words. What to make of this distorted scene? Amazed, shaken, and disgusted... Taken aback by such foreign images Surprised at the first sight of the dark side Some girl walks up to me Starts speaking with her clumsy tongue All I hear are demented phrases Perhaps English, or one of her own. Everything scares me, Stirring something inside Just a high class kid in fear Dumped into the unknown world, Without any pre-knowledge, Over-protected, Ignorant...spoiled Me...

Ravings of a Drunkard by Ery Shin

...but vices and virtues were uncommonly endorsed and the temptation seduced her slippery skin with scales to glisten in the sand that shone like a thousand emeralds that looked like my irises of the eye is so big but so wide is not good and very good simultaneously so I gave in to the eroticism of the heat and started to sweat profusely because I loved him and would die to feel his breath on my face vet the winds blew the desert storms fell and all was right in the world that Siddhartha hath created the god of the little things and plagued by grief he drove himself into madness for forty days and forty nights are unceasing torment to the conscious soul I who have no morals am below the beast and kissing me please please please streams of lover's words pouring from my fingertips my lazy tongue flicks back and forth over the palm of his hand and I writhe in ecstasy on the dance floor music hypnotizes and dulls my senses my perception heightens and I feel hopelessly dizzy, need somebody's lips to rest on, somebody's shoulder to lean against, somebody's body to caress and name my own what is in a name the hidden powers of mystery the sexual mystique comfort my sore body and aching palms give me solace dandelion dust is resting on the tuft of the donkey's ears oxen trudge on, wearily, make me break me beat me because I savor the pain when your palm slaps my thighs and chest I like to be beaten you leave scars on my breast your palms where your teeth pierced the tender, yielding skin I adore you flowers are eating me alive cannot force myself to inhale the sickly sweet aroma of lust I bit my lip and drew blood because I could not slack my thirst for your touch make me whole knit my words together weave the dream-catcher's spell save me from myself I surrendered to his hatred father washing dishes sweeping mopping picking up broken shards of wine picking up the broken pieces of my heart labored breathing bleeding nails clandestine bereavement why did you hurt me when all I did was adore you the autumn of the patriarch all the leaves turned gray shriveled like lemons the darkness is closing in....



Three Rules for Love by Sandy Choe

Love needs patience
Because a relationship that is young
Needs a lot of waiting
Each waiting for the other to become
What is manifested in dreams

Love must be expressed

Because hearts of lovers are vulnerable to special pestilences

Like apathy, neglect, and shortage of things to say

We will lose our tentative connection, our stones thrown at the sky

hoping to hit something

That links me to you, a woman to a man

Love cannot be hurried

Because it is one of the few remaining works in life

That is best executed slowly

It grows carefully, and takes very long

We try to draw this out, a pinch of time stolen from heaven

Because we want to be able to grow into each other's consciousness

And be able to share our lives and our precious futures

In the happiness that can be contained inside

A chaste touch, or watching the rain together in the morning

And all the dialogue in between



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