



All

the

things



that,

shine

pushed to extremity! But it's a deed to  
forlorn hope; I'd not take Linton by s  
this point he has been discreet in dread

*a charity anthology*

**ALL THE THINGS THAT SHINE**

cover design by Samantha Nimmo

edited by Samantha Nimmo

## EDITOR'S LETTER

*All The Things That Shine* is a collection of powerful work from fifty contributors. This project grew from the desire to empower and inspire both readers and contributors and tackle topics that aren't always spoken about openly. I am honoured to have been trusted with these pieces. In these pages you will find visual art, poetry and prose laden with raw, vulnerable emotion, strength and, above all, *power*. Power in creating, power in speaking out, power in healing and self love. Every single piece in this collection speaks from the heart, to the heart. The issues tackled in these works are incredibly heavy, but, together, I hope that that weight has been eased. I hope that you, the reader, and our contributors know that you are not alone. If you find yourself in these pages, I hope it brings you a sense of comfort, a sense of empowerment.

Every contributor's name and Instagram handle are beside their piece so that you can find more of their work if you like.

All of the proceeds from this project will be divided between two amazing charities: The Survivors Trust and Papyrus UK. The Survivors Trust provides specialist support for people who have survived rape, sexual violence and abuse. Papyrus UK is dedicated to the prevention of suicide in young people in the UK and campaigns to reduce the number of suicides in under 35s by equipping them and their communities with the skills they need to recognise and respond to suicidal behaviour. If you'd like to follow along and learn how much we raise, the total will be posted on my Instagram after the donation period ends!

The contact numbers for both charities are below. Please use them if you feel you need to reach out.

Papyrus UK: call - 0800 068 4141 or text – 07860039967

The Survivors Trust: 08088 010818

The title of this project was inspired by the following quote:

"I know nothing in this world that has as much power as a word. Sometimes I write one, and I just look at it until it begins to shine." (*Emily Dickinson*)

Every time I read this anthology, the words shine. I hope you can see it, too.

Please be aware that due to the theme of this anthology, many difficult and potentially triggering topics are discussed. On the next page, there is a full list of trigger warnings. Please protect yourself and your mental health, and do not read on if any of these topics may trigger you or cause distress. Above all, protecting your own health and wellbeing is the most important thing. If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to reach out.

My contact details are below if you want to talk or have any questions.

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## **TRIGGER WARNINGS**

Sex

Mental illness

Violence

Rape

Sexual abuse/harassment/victim blaming

Disordered eating/body dysmorphia

LGBTQ+ discrimination

Gender based violence

Death

Racism

Nudity (in artwork/photographs, no explicit images included)

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## UNTITLED

*by Simona Filiposka*

*@poetic.simona*

I don't wanna make you  
fall in love with me,  
I wanna make you  
fall in love with you.

I want you to notice  
the way that you love others  
and love yourself the same way.  
I want you to see yourself  
as a star that leads others home  
and shines on its own.  
As you're kind to others,  
be kind to yourself.

Just be yourself,  
just love yourself.



## WICKED SMART WOMAN

*by Leslie Yeary*

*@lesliemichellyeary*

Perhaps today  
She'll be a mermaid  
Sensual, sexy  
Stealing hearts  
With a song

Perhaps tomorrow  
She'll be like Hermione  
A wicked-smart  
Witch swishing  
Charms with her wand

Isn't that the beauty  
Of her feminine sway?  
A chameleon  
Adapting  
To the needs  
Of her day

Keeping pace  
Chasing dreams  
She'll sweep  
The stage

Looking up,  
Rising up  
To the coming  
New age

Let her keep  
Climbing and  
Running  
And dreaming

Breaking free from  
Fancy costumes  
She'll shatter  
Every glass ceiling.

## WHY LGBTQ+ REPRESENTATION MATTERS

by Lauren Pool

@laurenpoetry

because when the girl i loved before i knew what love was  
showed me how to collage cross-legged on her bedroom floor,  
i rearranged the letters of my heart to make them make sense on paper.  
learned to cut & stick my feelings until they looked just like  
what we saw in magazines.  
because when my girl friends asked me which boy at school i liked,  
i had already picked a name out of a hat.  
ready to fold myself up small,  
reshape myself like origami to fit in.  
because no one ever told me it was normal to love her like that,  
so i told myself it wasn't.  
all the happy endings i'd seen had princes in them,  
so i scribbled in my own margins. wrote myself off as a freak.  
told myself there must be something wrong with me for always writing girls into my story.  
because the first time i liked a boy, i was 11 & so relieved.  
locked up my feelings for girls like caging a bird  
& tried desperately to ignore their stirrings.  
because when i was in high school, *gay* was sharpened into insult in the constant war of words,  
hurled through the corridors like a knife.  
because there comes a time you get tired of being cut.  
because i was 15 when i first heard the word *bisexual*,  
& after a lifetime of hiding in the closet, making my heart small enough to wear on my sleeve,  
it felt like slipping into soft that was tailored to my shape;  
like finally, something fit.  
like maybe i could fit somewhere, too.  
because it took me years to unlearn the lessons i was taught by people who never understood the  
subject.  
because if i'd seen another girl like me on the page or silver screen,  
maybe i'd never have had to live my life in black-and-white.  
because every time someone sees themselves reflected in the media,  
the world gains a whole new colour -  
& every child deserves to see them all.

## **THE SACRED RED**

*by Kait Quinn*

*@kaitquinnpoetry*

why hide the pit of  
me, the sacred red flooding  
that makes a wolf wild  
woman of me? moon churns sea;  
no one judges her fury.



**THE CHARMING SECRET OF A MAN WEARING A HAT**

(oil on canvas)

*by Giada Rotundo*

*@giada.rotundo*

## **FIFTEEN**

*by Rebecca Kane*

*@r.kpoetry*

Nothing feels real.  
I'm okay with this now.  
I am too sweet for rock-salt lips.

Fifteen years  
of human editing.

I spent the first fifteen  
trying to find a way out and  
the other five  
trying to crawl  
back in.

I never noticed how cold the wardrobe handles are  
or how calm my dad is during dinner  
or how nice I look in jeans-

it's the little things.

Fifteen  
I can't get you back,  
I wouldn't want to.  
The guilt can consume me all it wants  
I don't mind the taste anymore.  
The axe went down on Anne's head and all  
the taxis are booked.

but  
the air is so clean and your mouth so wide  
and your voice  
so unheard.

## HEALING

*by Nayomi*

*@nayomipoetry*

I have to remember that the falling snow isn't dancing snowflakes,  
But ash falling from the sky,  
Stick out my tongue to catch the snowflakes  
Taste like sandpaper and rot and iron,  
What part of myself have I cremated today?  
Scattered parts of me  
Each speck of myself a unique flake  
Lost in the wind,  
Pretty how it falls  
Pretty as I fall  
I look so pretty  
Piling up on the ground,  
And when the snowfall stops  
I dust myself off  
Parting with the pieces of myself I decided to burn,  
Now I let the rain wash it away  
But I have to remember that the rain is my tears  
And that I mustn't drown myself in the Great Flood  
And that the sun will come,  
The sun will come again,  
Because she was always there behind the clouds  
Waiting for me to welcome her return

## WE'LL PAINT THE TOWN RED

by Diane Lato

@diane\_writes

We'll paint the town red  
To mourn and honour the sisters dead  
for us  
bludgeoned to death  
tossed in dumpsters or cut by butchers  
splashed on the front-page news or buried  
between tabloid pages

We'll paint the town red  
The colour of the blood you deem dirty  
unholy

conveniently forgetting that you wouldn't even be here  
(big mouths, narrow minds and all)  
if it weren't for our broken bones  
torn limbs  
& scarlet-splashed wings

We'll paint the town red  
the colour of the anger burning in us like an undying hearth  
red like blood oranges ready to burst  
because they kissed the sun a little too hard

red like the desert where my ancestors  
were dragged and left for dead  
red like the lipstick you both love & hate  
because it makes your knees go weak  
because you'd kill - and you *do kill* - us  
to taste it

to devour our mouths like deadly roses  
to crush our thorns hidden in creamy crimson  
to drink all of our red  
and swallow our voice with it

And I swear the next time I hear  
"Not all men"  
We won't just paint the town red

No  
we'll burn  
it

## down

and we'll bring the world to its knees, and you with it  
in torrent of ashes and smoking debris  
Clouds heavy with the thickest soot  
shrouding our fury in soothing black  
reminding us why we're in love with the night

The darkness strokes us like no one else  
cool velvet streaming down our raw  
red-streaked  
beaten skin  
And when we howl in concert  
and hear you shiver  
we'll lick our blood-red lips, we'll show silvery-sharp teeth  
glistening like thousands of waxing moons  
unafraid because  
anger has this magical quality ~  
*it's survival painted in wildfire*



## THE DAY I DIED

*after Christine Celestin*

*by Lydia Palm*

*@poet.\_.tree*

The day I died the sun shone harsh  
Deceit as white as truth  
And my music got lost in front of a piano  
When naked fingers crawled up innocent thighs  
Ripping it from my flesh  
Leaving me to wilt like a wildflower  
My roots praying to the skies for water  
And forgiveness  
I threw up my heart  
Wishing for the clouds to clear my lungs  
The day I died  
I shattered when pinned to the floor  
Silenced by deathly fear  
Clinging like a noose to my neck  
Forest growing from head  
Where wolves roam in sheepskin  
The day I died  
I lost myself in amber liquid  
Drowning in a glass of something with tequila  
The sleeping can't consent  
And neither can the wake  
When split open like a grapefruit  
And I died in moonlight  
Like thunder to the ground  
A silver blade to my wrist  
Searching for answers  
Vomiting black in my best friend's car  
And I sleep in death  
Uncomfortable in the scratchy skin it gave me  
But  
Arise again  
like Lazarus



*by Jade Ashleigh  
@jadeashleighart*

## **I TELL MY MOTHER I FEEL INSIGNIFICANT AND SHE TELLS ME TO WALK INTO THE POND**

*by Sabrina Y*

*@starlitstory*

I wade into the water. Waist-high in waterlilies; I feel smooth scales brush against my skin. My toes sink into sediment, boggy and cold. The pond's tranquillity is interrupted as I impatiently wade deeper. I feel silly until I see it. Ripples. Ripples. Ripples. I watch the small circle of waves fan out. I watch lily pads jump and dragonflies retreat. Listen to the sound of water sloshing and climbing up the bank. I stop. Stand still in the middle of the pond and contemplate my cognizance. I think about how entering the pond was consequential. How it was both a consequence and a creator of consequences. How an action so seemingly insignificant could ripple into something more. Maybe everything has significance, has purpose. Maybe there is no action, no existence without consequence. I guess what I'm trying to say is even on the days where I feel small, it is worth remembering; I am consequential too.

## **2014'S GHOST**

*by Zainab Hudha*

*@from.zainab*

lately, i have been apologising a lot and  
it is past midnight  
i could sleep my life away!  
neither sad nor happy, drifting

the weight of this boredom is crushing me  
i am becoming dust  
please! i don't want to be the remains of something that used to be please

there is not a person i am more apologetic towards than myself  
i am ashamed i am! but this is also how i know i am healing

they see me and  
tell me that i have changed  
as if i already did not know!  
i don't like it  
so instead of getting insecure, i get angry

i had thought i would not write a poem  
unless it was about how much i wanted to die!  
writing this can only mean one thing: i am better now

let all kinds of days come!  
i choose myself  
i love what i love unapologetically

in retrospect  
of course!  
of course, that happened  
how else was i supposed to get here

## THE FAIRY GARDEN

*by Kristiana Reed*

*@kristianamst*

Small and feral. Green knees and knotty hair, Nanny's little devil; bumbling without a care along the concrete stones with mossy edges and busy ant homes. How she longed to be feather light, paper transparent and magical within and without. To blink and merge with vivid climbers scaling varnished heights. Her tissue paper skin grazed on unruly branches; drawing blood thicker than the wind running its fingers through her curls, unbrushed and wild. With every skip and fumble along the path, she hoped the wind which beat her hair would cushion her feet and lift her into the air. Her hair would continue to whip around her cheeks and lips as she sprouted wings from her shoulder blades. Wings she tried to feel in the bath when her mother left her unsupervised. Wings sewn with dew drops, lilac and twilight; a glossy film shimmering like sunset ripples as they unfolded. Her skin would glimmer too, a pearlescent sheen freckled with sparkles. The transformation from girl to gossamer beauty casting shadows of glitter about her diminutive form, held in sturdy fragility. Her twinkling eyes would watch the earth leave her; toes pointed, elbows suspended as she brought her hands in front, kicked gently and in a flutter she would fly.

Then she would be one with the bursting blooms, swaying trees and intrepid climbers. Her hands would turn toward sunshine; palms open and fingers spread as her wings continued to peel open with chrysalis tenderness. In her transformation she would grow smaller. Small enough to splash in petal buckets of dew. Small enough to nestle into the trumpets of the narcissus.

She would become the magical being she never saw in the mirror. She would become a girl of invincible innocence; blossoming with unbridled hope and magnanimity.

## **FORBIDDEN**

*by Naomi Murcutt  
@naomijaneonline*

It's hard to have a positive birth  
in the pandemic,  
when your greatest supporter is forbidden  
to be with you,

until you're in established labour.

I know I'm in established labour

as I press my head against the wall  
in the empty, lonely corridor  
of the maternity unit.

I know I'm in established labour

in the examination room when I can't  
keep still because of the pain  
of my body pulling open.

I know I'm in established labour

when I gulp handfuls of water  
at the sink; no one is allowed  
to bring me water.

I know I'm in established labour

when my body tells me  
it's time to push.

Finally, they call him.

He runs up the stairs,  
to greet you, to hold me,

taking them two at a time.

## FOREIGN OBJECTS

*by Sumaya Enyegue*

*@sumayapoetry*

every girl of colour i know is a half-erased mistake waiting to happen. we have the savagery of our languages snatched from our throats and plated at some gentrified restaurant. Our origin stories are the first time a white man finds us desirable and saves us from our third world countries and makes us take off our cultures at the door. He saves us from the ghetto the hijab or the cruelty of our native tongue. We are mothered by a colonizer's need to save us from ourselves. The geography of our bodies is dissected and hung up in museums that call us uncivilised but fail to point out the places that slave ships sank.

Even now,

the white boy in my class tells me I'll be so much prettier if I smiled more so I bare my teeth to remind him that a starving animal will sink its teeth into the first poacher that threatened its survival.

## THE STARS TELL ME I AM LOUD

by Maddie McGlinchey

@mgm.poetry

my sun is in aries / which means an emphasis on *sun* / which means burning too brightly / which means being a raging fire / every time i ask the stars to tell me about myself / they tell me **i am loud** / and i know i have a voice that fills up every room i step into / i know my whispers can be heard through walls / but i will no longer apologize for the power contained by my lips / i know i was always meant to be a poet because my words insist on being heard / i will not keep quiet / i will not try to douse my flames in shame / **the stars tell me i am loud** / and i scream in response / i do not wait for mountaintops or anger to let my volume rise / i scream until the constant pressure is released in my chest / i scream because being quiet is overrated / **the stars tell me i am loud** / and i think of all the women before me who were spoon-fed silence / i think of the witches who tried to speak up and were met with fire / i think of my ancestors who had to hide behind silence to avoid persecution / i think of 15-year-old me who could not love out loud / **the stars tell me i am loud** / and i ask them how i couldn't be / when so many who came before me did not have the option to speak / when silence has always been suffocating / when men are allowed to say anything that comes to their minds / but women are always hushed / when my options are either to scream or to shut my mouth / and i have renounced silence as the weapon i now know it to be / **the stars tells me i am loud** / and i thank them



## **I CRIED TO MY MAMA AFTER I SPENT THE NIGHT WITH YOU**

*by Caitlin Anne*

*@caitlinannepoetry*

I wonder how that would make you feel I can't help but know you wouldn't care, and she said what is there to do about something so permanent, so undoable

and I say I don't know but I feel like an angry girl. the softness I used to fall asleep next to left long ago

she slipped under my bed one night and has called it her home ever since, they

told her she wouldn't survive in this world and she listened

I don't ever want to listen

I am sick of the self doubt that comes along with girlhood

that creeps it's way in and you're too busy with bra sizes and boys to notice it's made itself a home in your veins

I am sick of trying to balance all the requirements of being pretty

I want to drown my face in glitter and smudged liner, and truth is,

I've always been clumsy

let's put on ripped nylons and pink bras and throw out the apologies

let's braid our hair in dead daisies and march down the city streets claiming our freedom

let's wear lingerie without worrying if we're slutty or sexy. even if they think its for them. they always fucking think it's for them.

I'm tired of this feeling that always sits sour in my mouth but I can't name. I know it feels a lot like being the wrong thing - like being too much or too little - tastes a lot like sorry - tastes a lot like I'm not sure why I'm here

but I know I want to be, I know I want to grab the hand of every girl and say hey I know a place and we can dance under rainbow lights and forget we're in this world - where we can exist in a place where they don't try so hard to swallow us whole at night and rinse our taste out the next morning

so what do you say? if I take your hand, do you want to bathe ourselves in glitter and dance under the neon lights? do you want to sing fuck you to the world with me and fall asleep tonight?

## **I AM THE WALRUS**

*by Carolyn Tournier Schilling*

*@muvaseacow*

Svelt, stray cat. Old me. That dancer in LA when cool was garbage-coke and dangerously thin starlets were kept inside Karl Lagerfeld's sweaty palm.

Stuck in the passenger seat  
of Tracy Chapman's fast car for years (gas gone, what were we running on?)  
until I punched my Skeletor-fist through the window and jumped out like a secret rainbow,  
arching away to safety.

Rape PTSD healing found by breathing through the pelvis, my pelvis,  
and Reiki.  
And now, in this 10th life,  
as mother, generous cow, Chaucer's Wife of Bath,  
I fulfill my duty to my daughter with our daily piggyback ride because I'm hella strong.  
My daughter loves my roundness, my Seroquel love handles to hug on.

Stray cat found a home and got a little phat.

I could be that model for Ri Ri's next Fenty line if she had a collection for moms.  
And if she and Drake came out with a single about goddess tummy pouches, like how they hold  
answers to the secrets of life inside every fat cell,  
you know I could be in that video.

My daughter and I go to the Indianapolis zoo just to say hi to that one-eyed, rescued Walrus  
named Ginger.  
That gregarious creature, a miracle in her own evolution.  
Blubber is her super hero cape.  
You know, I bet a Walrus can imitate a cat. But not the other way around.

by Johanna Rawlings  
@johanna\_writes

jump  
and run  
and play,  
who cared how many scars I gathered on my knees?

But when you ask when I first learnt to love my body,  
you don't mean then,  
you mean after I fell out of love with it,  
and when I clawed that love back again.

I remember when I was in primary school,  
I had to wear a sports bra under my swimming costume  
as I was growing into my female form faster than most,  
and I remember hiding in the bathroom stalls

I remember in secondary school,  
being laughed at if I didn't shave under my arms before every netball match,  
my sister calling me gross if I didn't shave my legs,  
and I remember sitting at the dining room table,  
listening to my mum and aunt

my body  
belonged more to others than to myself.

The first day I learnt to love my body  
was an ordinary one,  
I was getting dressed after a shower,  
and usually I would rush past the mirror  
but that day I stopped

and told myself to find something I liked in my refection,  
not that I had to like it all,  
but that I had to find something,  
some part of my body,  
that I liked,  
and the first time I did this I picked my boobs,  
the first few times I did this I always picked my boobs,  
because they make me feel feminine  
and I love that.

But sometimes I'd like my shoulders too,  
because they're smooth and make me feel strong  
I'd often avoid my tummy and thighs,  
and I'll admit not much has changed there,  
but the more I did this the more of my body I liked.

I liked my ribs because they taper in,  
and maybe not my double-chin,  
but I liked my eyes too,  
because they're large and focused  
and go from brown to green to blue,  
and over time I grew  
to love my body more  
and more.

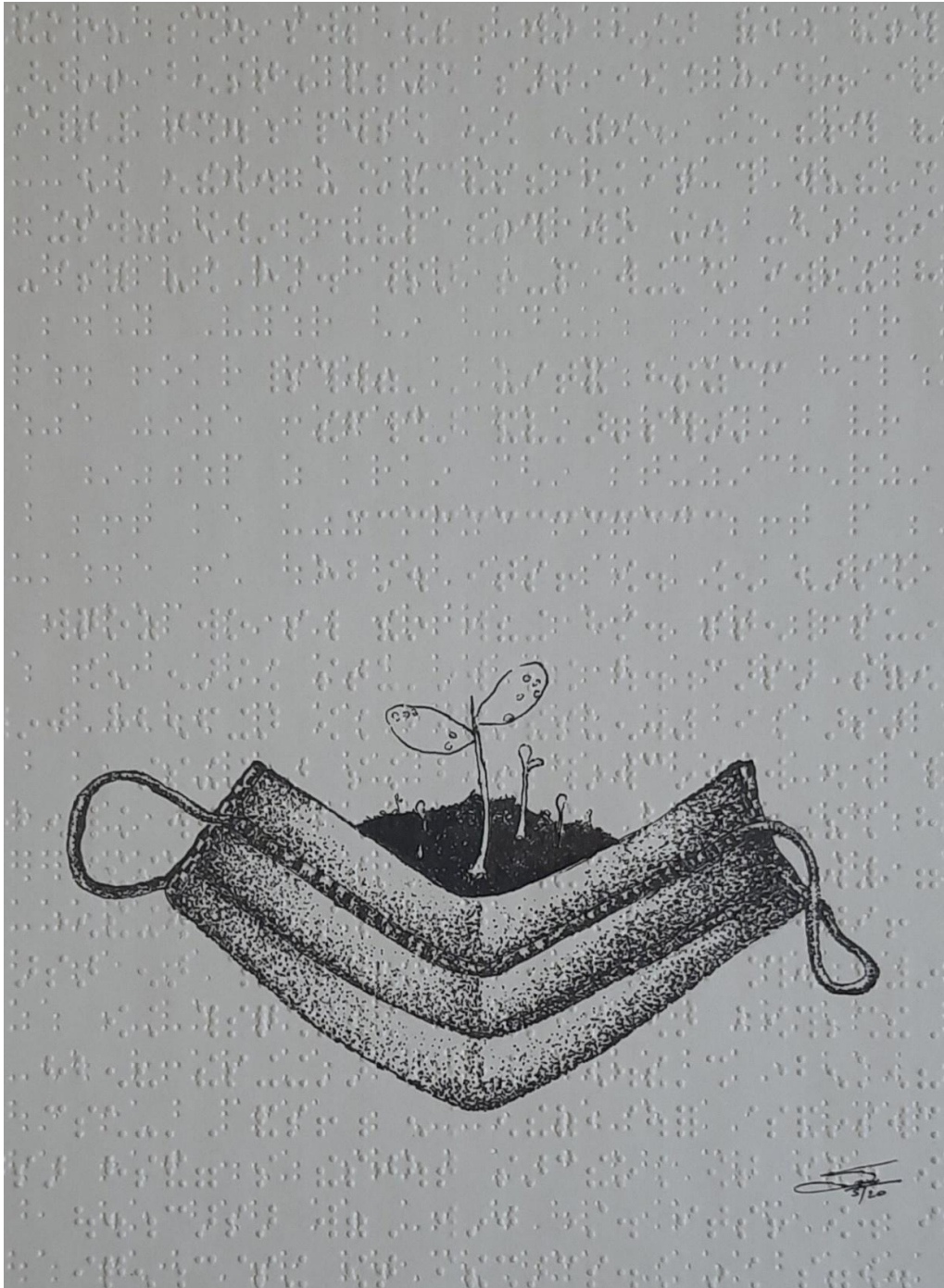
I stopped shaving everywhere,  
I stopped worrying so much,  
and I started making better decisions,  
for my health

and for my body alone.

I stopped caring about whether I was fat or not,  
and started caring about  
                        whether I was looking after the body I had,  
and my reframed world gets knocked every now and again,  
when people think they can still comment on how much weight I've gained  
  or if I'm looking slim that day,  
but I can stand tall knowing  
  I am powerful,  
because I know what I look like under all these clothes,  
and sure my body's not perfect,  
but the longer I stare at her in the mirror,  
the more the "bad" things become so meaningless,  
and the more good things I see.

So screw everyone that's ever dared to open their mouths  
and critique your body,  
that dared to tell you you were not perfect,  
because you are beautiful,  
and maybe next time you get out of the shower  
you'll look at your own reflection,

and find something you love about yourself,  
because the moment I did  
is the moment I first learnt to love my body.



**SURVIVE**  
(pen on Braille)  
*by Sakhi*  
*@insta\_sakhi\_lalit*

## 9 THINGS I WISH I SAID TO EVERY WOMAN IN MY POEMS

*by Shayoni*

*@stressedmeowt*

1. breathe quickly, this is not a drill. you are a country at war.
2. you will always be a country at war. when you are 13. when you are 28. even on your 50th birthday. happy birthday, you're at war.
3. on some days, you are a country on the brink of losing. on some days, you are a country with countless conquests. some days are spoken about in hushed whispers - that is when this war bleeds you dry. you distrust pain but pain is a skilled double agent. pain pulls out "an instruction manual on how to fix broken taps" from her fishnet stockings. you now know pain as your best friend.
4. breathe quickly. i told you this is not a drill. you're still a country at war. stretch marks on your stomach are unjust lines drawn on tattered maps of your country. like a child with a box of crayons - he wasn't taught that your stomach cannot - should not - be marked upon. tell me, which war was just?
5. it's been years now. you are nothing but a country at war. offer your sacrificial prayers to Ares like a good girl.
6. breathe quickly. this war is not a drill. this war is not a fascist-communist propagandist. you don't have to brandish a hammer & sickle. throw your bundle of sticks & axe out of the window. unhook that hakenkreuz. this is not a war for men. only women hear war sirens. only women hear battle cries of other women.
7. this war is fought within the territories of a woman's body. this war is fought within you and i. this war is not a cabaret dancer - seducing a woman's father, brother, husband or lover. this war only gives birth to one and then liberates you. (does it?)
8. breathe slowly. you're not a country at war anymore.
9. peace treaties are paper thin glasses - fragile, bound to break. don't hold your breath. breathe quickly. you will always be a country at war because war is peace.

## UNTITLED

*by Absia*

*@absianwriting*

women seem to be the greatest  
whether it is in the media,  
through movies or news headlines,  
in friendship groups,  
workers in stores,  
the ones in management  
and the ones cleaning dirty floors,  
the women who have birthed,  
the women who have lost  
and the ones who have experienced neither,  
the ones we don't see in the public eye,  
the homemakers,  
the cooks,  
the housewives,  
the so called "shit takers."  
the women of power,  
love,  
loyalty,  
spirit  
and empowerment.

- liberty is the definition of women



## MY THERAPIST ASKS ME TO DESCRIBE MY ANXIETY

by Samantha Nimmo

@sn.poetry

Okay so it's like this. Imagine it's always storming. Imagine the thunder is so loud it rattles your ribs. Imagine the lightning is so bright it stains your retinas. Imagine you never get used to it. Imagine that every single time the flash goes off or the drum roll begins, your ribs break and your eyes burn.

No? Okay so it's like this. Imagine your skin fits wrong. Imagine you want to unzip it and crawl out but you can't. You've been sewn in. Imagine you're itchy all over. But no matter how hard you scratch, the urge just won't go away. Imagine you're floating. And your body is in the bathtub. Your body is in the bathtub all hunched over with its head on its knees and its knees are bruised. Your body is in the bathtub and its skin is scalding under the spray but the body isn't moving. Imagine you watch for hours. Imagine wading through waterlogged sand to get back to it. Imagine knowing you're the one who sewed up the seams.

What do you mean that doesn't make sense? Okay fine so it's like this. Your resting heartbeat is 120bpm. Your feet are aching from always running away in your dreams. Your fingernails have retreated past the safety of your skin. Imagine you're making coffee in the morning. Imagine drinking the water straight from the kettle. Imagine feeling that burning inside every day. Imagine always being ready to flee. Where to. What from. Imagine never knowing. Imagine never feeling safe. Imagine pulling your lips apart from your teeth to see where the truth went. Imagine peeling wallpaper. And picking open painted shut windows. Imagine sticking the wallpaper back up with pritt-stick. Imagine repainting the windows.

*I think we're getting off topic.*

No. We're just getting started. So imagine you're shaking. Imagine you shake 'til you're sick. Imagine the cool touch of the bathroom floor. Imagine everyone is sleeping. Imagine you can't stand. Your legs are papier maché. Imagine pouring water over them to watch them dissolve. Imagine never being more than a heart and a stomach. Imagine fistfuls of hair and bleeding scalps. Imagine concerned faces and muted noise. Imagine the room is spinning. And you're screaming. But no one else is spinning or screaming or dizzy. Just stop spinning they say. But you can't. The floor is the spinning top you used to play with as a kid. The one you got in your stocking for Christmas. The walls are fun house mirrors. You can't tell which reflection is the real one. Imagine wanting to get off the ride. Imagine being told there is no ride.

*Time's up.*

## **HIDDEN IN AN URBAN LANDSCAPE OF MAN'S MAKING**

*by Lana Smith*

*@lanagsmith*

Beyond the concrete of achievement and discontent  
An oasis manifests  
Scented flowers in abundance  
Strewn in orderly, cyclical chaos  
Their beautiful scent  
Sweetened and magnified by the women  
Surrounding them  
We gathered to tell our stories  
To penetrate  
And dispel the myths of  
One who bleeds  
Strengthened  
(Reshaping)Sisterhood



## WHAT WERE YOU WEARING?

*by Geneva Lark Hutchinson*

*@genevalark\_*

## **SWEET DREAMS**

*by Ananya Tayal*

*@ananyaatayal*

I kiss the graves of sorrows  
tucked in the layers of my skin  
with the scarlet roses of happiness  
that grow over my skin as pearly dryness.

But they shed away time and again,  
so I hush my sorrows to sleep with hints of creams  
and smoothen them to dreams.  
And they don't rise as I cry, "Go back to sleep. Shhh. Go back to sleep".

## UNTITLED

*by Marisa Jorgensen*

*@writingbymarisa*

be careful. the quiet ones aren't always quiet. you should  
remember the next time you question it, that even silence has  
something to say. because i promise you we have claws we don't  
show and teeth we don't use and we are collections of both your  
favourite utopian fantasies and dystopian worlds. we are paradoxes  
and contradictions and unpredictable in the best way. we can be  
nightmares. we can be the loveliest of dreams. we don't usually  
stand out, but if we want to, we will. and it will shock you. you won't  
see us coming, you see? for the sound of our walk is so slight, but if  
you stop—if perhaps for a second you stilled your mind—maybe  
you'll hear it. the secrets bubbling under our skin. the words shut  
behind our sealed lips. the strength deep within our piercing eyes.  
our power. it's not attention grabbing but i promise it's attention  
holding once it finds a grip. because it hold on. it captures you and  
it never lets go. once you see us we cannot be unseen. you are  
forever changed. we may speak little and dislike small talk most  
days but that only intensifies our mystery, wouldn't you say? we are  
the eye of the storm and protected by the skies but you first must  
reach us. if you want to know more, you must get through. and then  
perhaps, you'll discover that we aren't so quiet after all. because  
the quiet ones, they're the ones who will surprise you,  
do you see? we're the ones who will change the world.  
one step one word one voice  
one

at a

time.

## A SMALL REVELATION

(For Chita)

*by Marie Harlan*

*@\_marieharlan*

When I was younger I wanted the magic-  
the dark storms  
that would overshadow  
the absolute  
emptiness  
of my brittle bones.

And I got the magic I prayed for  
and then my bones  
shifted into grotesque shapes  
just so I could fit  
his name in my body.

But he needed continents  
and I was all city.

I did not have enough  
empty space left.

His name spilled from my mouth.  
His syllables twisted against my accent and I learned to become fluent:

in words that sink against  
the ground in  
whimpers  
apologies  
for the dreams I could not control.

For the way my body could not house both our souls.

When I was younger  
I wanted love  
to destroy me

Now:  
I want love  
to resurrect me.

## **BURNT TONGUE**

*by Emily Stoddard*

*@em.stoddard.writes*

Sometimes

the memory stings and I can't make it go away. It's a burnt tongue after the first sip of hot cocoa on a chilly day. The lingering ache reminds me that things can never be the same. But I will fall asleep as soon as my brain will let me, and I will forget about what can never be. Wake me in the morning, hazy from a leftover prayer, and find me searching for the fire again only just after my burn has healed.



by Silvana Smith  
@eggexplorer



## **REIGN**

*by Fatima Naveed*

*@words.and.such\_*

Oh, my darling queen,  
there'll always be people who  
think you're not fit to be on the throne-  
the mere thought of it insane,

but then there'll be some who clearly know  
girl, you were always meant to reign.

## NOT ICARUS / ANGEL FLYING

*by Lois*

*@whylois*

She is best observed at a distance  
A glimmer on the horizon  
She flickers like a mirage  
And you mistake her glitter-coated eyes  
For another desert-oasis-dream

Her butterfly kisses buffet tornadoes into being  
For didn't you know?  
She carries a bellyful of gale  
And a heartful of melodies  
From long-lost ballades

Her name is not Icarus  
She does not know what it means to fall  
She has felt the sun scorch her skin  
She has tasted the sea salt on her lips  
And she knows better than to trust wings made by man

She leaps off cliffs with no fear  
Daring gravity to drop her  
As she rushes to meet the sky  
With the belief that she will grow the wings  
She was promised at her birth

She sculpts shaft from bone marrow  
Knits feathers from eyelashes  
Until every tingle in her fingers  
Whips up whirlwinds at her fingertips  
And she is carried on a wing and a prayer

For you see, she is an angel in disguise  
But she will never fall  
How can she, when she fell a long time ago  
And soared into the sunrise  
On the wings she grew?

## **WHO'D BE THE SEASHORE...?**

*by B. Elae*

*@b.elae*

Believing that this world,  
is better off without you,  
is much more than simply unsound  
Who'd be the seashore,  
if you weren't around?

## PEACE OFFERING

*by Erin Cherie*

*@erincheriepoetry*

I recall a time when I pressed my ear against the radio  
surprised to find my own voice in its melodic melancholy  
a whisper reserved just for me  
declaring war with the body who built my only stable home  
even when the wind bound so cold around my feet  
it tried so hard to bury me  
the complications, the risks, the worry  
have you ever seen a home rebuild itself  
brick by brick  
even when those bricks feel broken and weightless?  
still I couldn't break the habit  
hiding my weapons in that trapped door in the depths of my head  
sometimes I'd remove them and just stare at them  
to divert my eyes from myself  
how easy it is to slip  
on the cracked grounds of loathing  
but it's true I saw the colours before I learned how to paint them  
every freckle placed with precision for the outline of people  
of women  
how could I not have seen them?  
the ones who fought for a sky that I could sink into or fly in  
a choice  
carving every bone to form the frame that's kept persisting  
so it's enough now  
if I've a white flag, then there's no war here on these seas  
because collectively our hearts beat, we sign our names and bare our teeth  
I'm reminded that the pieces also belong to those before me  
every flaw has its meaning and in the end  
it's a peace offering  
perhaps it could even be enough  
to be free

## POSTPARTUM / MOTHER WHO IS TIRED

*by Lynnea Fitzgerald*

*@fermentingferns*

I am holding a hand like a fat  
raspberry and it belongs to a boy who needs me/ I  
need him oh I need him, this is so big it envelops  
everything, plant-cracking-concrete-to-get-to-the-sun  
shit, can't-be-explained but I'm tired I think if I died  
I'd still be tired/ bone-tired, can't-feel-from-your-  
elbows-down tired  
time is so real when you're the one pressing start,  
staring at proof of an actual beginning, you become so  
aware of the ending/ that thing in your chest is now  
a sharp rock beating itself back and forth (loudly), you  
think of the people you've lost- how they started just like  
this/ what you're holding in your arms  
grief and love are the same, birth and death are  
the same/ you come and you feel and you make others  
feel and I hope I always make him feel loved, I hope  
he is good, I hope I have been good I worry—

## MY MOTHER SAYS BISEXUALS ARE GREEDY AND SUDDENLY I'VE LOST MY APPETITE

by Lauren Poole

@laurenapoetry

she is in the kitchen with her friend, spitting out my identity before she's even had chance to chew on it,  
before i've ever even let it spill from my tongue.  
'like, i'm fine with lesbians, but i think bisexuals are just *greedy*.'

*greedy*, she says,  
and the peach pit sinking inside of me hits bottom.  
i vow never to tell her about my taste for sweet, dripping fruit.

*greedy*, she says,  
and i swallow the words i've spent years sharpening  
in case i ever needed to fight to be seen by her.  
for the first time, i'd rather be invisible  
than openly bisexual.

*greedy*, she says,  
and i am choking on my own endless capacity for love,  
swallowing my heart like chewed-up cherry pulp -  
sweet and hurt and nothing anyone really wants to see.

when she shouts of me for dinner,  
i tell her i am not hungry. i am sickened  
by the way my name sounds in her mouth.  
i do not know how to turn my identity  
into something palatable enough  
for her taste.

if i am greedy for loving everyone,  
then so be it.  
let me be all jaw and no bite.  
let me be soft teeth sinking into the names  
of boys and girls and all the different ways  
they carry their hearts. let my mouth be  
the one to show them what it is to just be held.  
if i am greedy, let greedy mean

let greedy mean  
men's aftershave and women's eyelashes  
and the universal warmth of skin,  
how it doesn't matter the body that wears it

because i can taste light in them all.



**LUMINOUS**

(oil on canvas)

*by Giada Rotundo*

*@giada.rotund*

## GOOD BONES

*by Elaoise Benson*

*@ebenson\_art*

I am lived in,  
like a home,  
such softness,  
is only body born.  
And I dig my fingers  
in, feel it squish,  
like Sunday duvets  
in a late morning glow.  
I wiggle my toes,  
half painted,  
and at once forgotten,  
like a second bathroom,  
or a sunburnt garden shed.

These feet were made  
for walking forward.  
They are rusted wheels,  
on a camper van,  
which still never quite gives up.  
And it's frame,  
still curves and crests,  
mounded hips,  
and sloping breasts.  
Holding every wish inside,  
like sunken pillows,  
of youths hopeful dreams.

My mother bore me,  
thick skin,  
for purpose driven work.  
Skin that houses,  
wearing memories.  
Not tarnished,  
but worn like fine jewels,  
made to shine,  
a grandmother's kiss,  
on her best kept pearls.

These ivory bones,  
are my first grown home.  
Beautiful,  
built brave,  
belly warm,  
eyes looking up,  
beyond the rafters.  
Everything's included,  
no one will be alone.



Because my soul,  
She finds company,  
in every aching bone.

**DEAR TEMPTATION:**

*by Melis Gördem*  
*@lovecommamelis*

i hope this letter finds you  
poorly, you tenacious  
tease. i decided to write  
back to you because  
the ink that has bled  
from your featherpen  
through your correspondence  
has been intoxicating me—  
literally and metaphorically.

your words have no  
influence on me anymore,  
for within your letters,  
they lack structure  
and shape similar  
to your abstract body.

yes, the same bodacious body  
with the same luscious lips  
that once whispered to me,  
“how would you know  
if you never tried?”

your deceiving dare  
lingered on my skin  
like a leech, sucking  
at the resistance  
flowing in my veins  
until i caved in.

and so i did,  
my diabolical lover,  
you broke me down  
and infiltrated  
my system with sweet-  
nothings, blinding  
my aspirations  
of being welcomed  
at the Gates of Heaven.

you wrapped me  
around your chains,  
the sinister bondage  
cool against my skin,  
until my blood ceased  
circulating. you held  
my head like an apple,

biting into my skull  
and infusing it with  
your sweet poison.

you tried recreating  
the Snow White tale,  
but now i challenge  
the ending that you  
wish to write.

attached is the resilience  
from the blood  
you weren't  
and wouldn't ever  
be able to sap.

insincerely,

your last victim  
or your first survivor.  
*you decide.*

## PERMISSION

by Juliana Denrich  
@julianadenrich

let's talk about permission  
like  
who gave you  
permission  
to talk about my body like it's sand  
like  
it's okay for salty sweaty bodies to slam against the grain of my skin  
because I exist exactly where I am supposed to be

you've mistaken me  
sand is walked on  
until the wind picks up  
gets inspired  
reclaims its land  
blinds thieves in storms of madness

who gave you  
permission  
to touch parts of my body that only my bed sheets know well  
i've never heard my hip bones ask for love  
because they do not need to  
they already know it  
love  
and when they forget it  
love  
i have hands that know the shape of water  
that know that when the shower is cold my hips can dance

who gave you  
permission  
to steal the parts of me I save for the sun  
that i save for gold lit rooms and yellow towels  
*your gaze is not a gift*  
*my reflection is*  
*fuck off*

YOUR BODY IS YOURS AND  
YOURS ALONE



MAKE IT A PLACE YOU CAN  
CALL HOME

*by Emag*  
*@emag\_co*

## UNTITLED

*by Samantha Colon*

*@ samcolOn*

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue,  
Que sera, sera  
What will be will be.  
How many cliches will it take  
To soothe the ache  
Of how life keeps turning out to be.  
We stopped being kids younger than most  
Never the baby, the weight of the world on our back—  
Too afraid to see what would happen if we ever lacked.  
I wish I could write a poem about how it'll all be okay,  
Take you to a secret place where we can all escape.  
But the only way out is through.  
And things will be really blue,  
But it's up to you—  
To take this hand,  
And turn it into something new.

— You will survive it all.

## UNTITLED

*by Dua Anjum*

*@duanjumm*

if you care about something,  
you are political. I'm sorry to tell you.  
you are political. I'm sorry, you are.  
and I care about much that I cannot contain  
so my poetry is politics—perhaps not prolific politics,  
political nonetheless—and my poetry is politics.  
when I speak to you, I speak my truth.  
my metaphors attempt some public service.  
this is no pastiche and no post-mortem tribute.  
this is no primal roar and no paradoxical parable.  
this is no pulp fiction and no propaganda.  
I am no princess of pirates, no preacher,  
certainly no Pulitzer prize, no paperweight.  
sure, there is a certain panic to certain parts,  
and what I won't deny is the pathos—  
for passion and politics go hand in hand.  
but if you care about something,  
use your words and your actions in solidarity.  
passive pragmatism is no longer a need, please.  
privileged positivity doesn't get us anywhere.  
and the time to simply consider wrong to be wrong  
has long passed.

## **WOLF**

*by Holly Ruskin*  
*@mother.in.motion*

to be a girl  
caught between  
womanhood and  
her younger self  
is to live in a  
liminal space  
of both a knowing  
and gradual  
undoing  
so that while  
the world waits  
for no woman  
to learn who she is  
we must trust her  
to find her truth  
and say it  
out loud  
louder  
loudest  
not a shout  
but a howl  
the transformation  
not from girl to woman  
but woman into  
wolf



## I WANT TO BE SEEN

*by Jemma Chawla*

*@newstanza*

Glimpsed, glanced, I want to be seen

Not with your undressing eyes in our lustful moments

Not by the eyes of a stranger nor their unwanted wolf whistling lips

Not with a hurried peek and an excuse me shuffle on platform two

Not the possible sight through your oversized tortoiseshell sunnies

Nor the awkward side to side dance of over politeness in the frozen aisle

You may see me but be assured you've not *seen* me

I've myself have not yet seen its illuminated totality

Not yet

It's growing, learning and seeking out

I'll be more than what you simplistically see

I'll be heard

I'll be seen

## WE CAN'T LET THEM BEAT US

by Morgan Solomon

@morganhsolo

Flaunt my credentials, they deem me 'essential'

***I'm a strong, independent woman***

Laundry red-stained, ibuprofen hides the pain

*I'm a strong, independent woman*

Remembering to speak up, but getting comments on my makeup?

*I'm a strong, independent woman*

Sweet aromas from the oven, the baby needs loving

*Still a strong, independent woman*

Kamala takes flight, Nassar loses the fight

**WE ARE STRONG, INDEPENDENT WOMEN**

He comes in the cover of dark, "no" I bark

*I'm a strong, independent woman*

Behind watery eyes, I relive that night

*I'm a strong, independent woman*

## **MY HOME**

*by Jennie Louise*

*@words\_by\_jennie*

My home will be a home  
without anger.

No slamming doors or explosions of  
glass that leave the smell of burnt food  
drifting through the rooms.

No name calling, no bullying,  
Because we know that broken bones  
don't mend in the same way.

My home will be a home  
with no fear, no hurt, no worry.

It will be gentle and warm  
and will keep my loved ones safe.

I may come from a damaged home  
but I will build something whole;  
A place where the smell of cooked food  
dances through the rooms.



## RISE AND SHINE

*by Anna Lustberg*  
*@annalustberg*

## MY PROFESSOR ASKS US TO INTRODUCE OURSELVES TO THE CLASS

*by Caitlin Anne*

*@caitlinannepoetry*

and I spit up broken glass and try to wash the blood down with water but there is so much my  
god there is always so much I zip my skin back on rip out the stray hairs that will just never  
fucking lay flat I tie my bones back together with string and pray they will hold on long enough I  
lie through my teeth I always lie through my teeth because no one wants to hear about the blood.  
why does no one ever ask about the blood? my god there is so much always so much and I am  
so good at pretending there isn't any it would be funny if it wasn't just sad but no one ever asks  
and grief is this horrible thing worse than the monsters under your bed worse than the boy who  
only used you it hurts like teeth cutting into your flesh except it's your heart and it's beating one  
second and laying still the next but it's still inside of you and for some godforsaken reason you're  
still breathing and you act as though your lungs aren't filling up with blood but my god there is  
just always so much you act as though you aren't one ragged breath away from drowning as  
though you aren't shooting off flare guns but nobody is noticing as though they aren't purposely  
looking away and you spit up the broken glass and there's a shard  
still speared through your tongue but you tell yourself it's okay it's okay just talk through the pain  
you're always so good at talking through the pain

## UNTITLED

*by Emily Way*

*@emilywaywrites*

I am a domesticated cat  
With the shadow of a tiger  
I tip toe through these halls  
Only to scream into my pillow  
If I stick my head out of the window  
And breathe in deep  
This air  
This life  
I remember  
Just for a moment  
How powerful I am  
And how much more  
We could be  
Run wild  
Be free  
My tiger and me

## **MONSTROUS PRETTY**

*by Skyler Saunders*

*@smilingatmysandwich*

I'm dying to forget how fragile I am -  
this deadly iridescent grove, and you -  
I'm groveling, I didn't come prepared,  
my knees shredded but my gums  
pink as ever - you can see them, can't  
you? I got my fangs whitened for you,  
I put on every shade of convenience  
store lipstick I could fit in my pockets  
- the hair is jutting up through the  
cracks in the pavement, I'm wonder  
ing if you might find some of this  
useful - my mouth is only gently used,  
remember - be gentle - I'm fragile

## NOW I UNDERSTAND MEDUSA

*by Amanda Karch*

*@akkwriting*

I can see it in your eyes -  
tidal currents,  
tectonic plates,  
thunderstorms: a power unexplainable.

she waits,  
head in the shadows  
of the figures who tell you

*not good enough*  
*not good enough*  
*good...for a woman*

but one day  
she will look up,  
stare those in the eye  
who dare to defy her dream,  
making sure they  
stand for her,  
stone-still,  
supporting her or at least  
respecting her

*- and now I understand Medusa*



## **EVE REMEMBERING**

after Toni Morrison

*by Kristiana Reed*

*@kristianamst*

I

She took a bite and saw the stars:  
all the chalk of a rib ground into obedience,  
how everything was created in God's image,  
in man's eye but she was Birth and blood.

II

She bled red apples, renewed herself,  
shed her second skin, became uncomfortable  
in the laws of man; danced Bacchic like  
and burned in ecstasy, burned at stakes.

III

She swallowed her hope and pushed  
- gave life - gave breath to freedom,  
started the fires man said she could not have,  
bit down on mankind's marble - broke

their teeth on her power - taught them  
Eve is a name, Eve is sunset and the dawn,  
Eve is hunger for all we have been denied.  
Eve remembers.

## UNTITLED

*by Nargis Hassanali*

*@ nargis\_shabbir\_hassanali*

Don't be scared of your own reflection.

The shadow you see is yours .

It's :

The girl who feels too much

The girl who thinks too much

The girl whose laughs with simplicity

The girl from whom flowers blossom from her skull

The girl who feels the bursting consciousness of everything ; she's a deep feeler .

She absorbs the positivity into her salty bones and creates room for more internal strength.

This what defines her , she holds the world in her hand and walks as she unfolds her life

Let no one stop you from loving your self, allow the beautiful things to happen to you

## LEARNING TO BE GIRL

*by Sabrina Y*

*@starlitstory*

I was never good at learning to be girl.

Never understood how to play dead,  
How to stay still as the bears sniff my corpse,  
How to keep quiet in the forest fire,  
And lick my burns only when the smoke clears.  
I've always been more wit than wisdom,  
More act than think,  
Using my tongue as a weapon,  
Instead of as an apology,  
Fight the battles I've been told to avoid,  
I will not be sentenced to silence.

When the wolves circle around me waiting to attack,  
I will remind them my first words were 'no',  
And I learnt how to eye roll before they learnt to wink,  
When they howl at me,  
I will howl back louder.

I am not good at camouflage,  
I don't blend into walls, I build them,  
Construct fortresses and towers,  
Crown myself a queen,  
This is my holy ground,  
And you are not welcomed,

I was never good at learning to be girl.  
So, let's change what they teach us.

## UNTITLED

by L.W

@l.w.poet

One day in school, I used a tiny blue ribbon to hold up my hair.  
A boy said it should be pink, since *I'm a girl*.  
That night I had a dream that I grew ribbons,  
of all kinds and colours, for hair.  
I dreamt they were long, powerful and beautiful.  
When I went to school I went straight up to that boy  
and before he could say anything,  
I reached into my pocket only to grab the most powerful one of all;  
a thick piece of *pink* velvet.  
I tied it around his head,  
covering his mouth.

## **I CHOKE ON MY INHIBITIONS AND ALMOST CONVINCE MYSELF THAT I AM ENOUGH**

(format inspired by Skyler Saunders @smilingatmysandwich)

*by Shivani Manohar*

*@balladierofttheordinary*

alternate title: all of my victories are small ones but that's okay. alternate title: sometimes, i count getting through the day as a victory just because i need a win, but that's okay too. alternate title: i am whole. i am whole. i am whole. alternate title: i was supposed to clean up the mess in my head but i'm sitting on the floor browsing through a big box of my favourite memories. the cleaning can wait another day. alternate title: i cried for ten minutes today. alternate title: i cried for only ten minutes today. alternate title: i don't really know how i'm doing. does anybody? alternate title: at least i'm good at pretending. alternate title: maybe tomorrow, i'll be almost happy. alternate title: sometimes, almost is all you get. alternate title: sometimes, almost is enough.



*by Simona Encheva  
(@colorful\_simone)*

## **BEAUTIFUL**

*by Maria Tempany*

*@theryhmingone*

The top may say “beautiful” but I feel anything but.  
It would be much more apt if it said “stuck in a rut”  
My clothes just won’t fit and I can’t stop the binging,  
I catch a glance in the mirror and I can’t keep from cringing.

Then I look at the bundle of joy in my arm,  
Not a thing I won’t do to keep her from harm.  
And while days roll into nights on this parenting wheel,  
I know that “beautiful” is Just how I want Her to feel.

And how will she learn If I put myself down?  
How will self-love engulf her, if in insults I drown?  
So, it’s time to stop slating myself in this way.  
Beauty shines from within and not by what you weigh.

So, in fact, a reminder to me and to you,  
We’re all Beautiful mommas, we must let it shine through!  
Try to show self-compassion and allow some leeway,  
We’ve made these gorgeous babies at the end of the day

## UNTITLED

*by Marisa Jorgensen*

*@writingbymarisa*

and that's the dark side of perfectionism. the part they don't seem to talk about, for perhaps it holds too much truth. perhaps it's weight is too much for most to carry. the

part that chips away at you. the haunting voices inside your head. the ones that tell you over and over again that it's too much or it's not enough and that perhaps it'll never quite be enough and there's nothing you can do about it. that trying to fix your creations will only make them worse. not quite up to expectations, it shouts. just when you think you're finished, it is still there, wavering like a ghost that's lost its way. invisible arms throwing you into the fire. fix that, change that, alter this. why are you making so many stupid mistakes? perfectionism is a liar, is what they don't tell you. it will leave you chasing after your own tail. trying to grasp onto something that isn't there. feeling hollow and empty. it will crawl into the deepest parts of you, the most authentic piece of your heart, and plant black holes. voids so damn easy to get sucked into. it is always watching, waiting, a thief in the night so persistent in its every cry. echoed voices like daggers slicing through the beauty that rests right before your eyes. your art lacks the delicacy of rose petals and the elegance of tulips, is what it says. or perhaps it is too delicate or too elegant. perhaps you should tone it down a bit. it's always something. it takes all that you give and spins it into rubbish. it leaves you valuing the opinions of others more than your own and then not even believing anyone who leaves a compliment. sure, it is good, they may say, but good to a perfectionist only means okay. perfectionism is a trick, you see? for we are blind to our own capabilities. but when you begin to starve the perfectionism that can so easily morph into fear, you rise. you fly. you shine. you realize the truth about anything you create, which is that as long as it is true to you, it is true. as long as it is true to you, it is always enough. every time.



## **BLACK GIRL MAGIC**

*by Sumaya Enyegue*

*@sumayapoetry*

turning rage into silence // a prayer into a lost cause // this skin into a mounted painting //  
have

a heart fat with loss and still give // sing with a mouth full of language that is not my own //  
mourn the language stolen from me // abracadabra myself a new smile // to disappear with the  
snap of a finger // to return to rubble and start from scratch // to be cut in half // both girl  
and

woman // girl when my body is not my own // woman when my body is not my own // my  
body is not my own // to be a black daughter // an exotic friend // an obsidian sister // a dark  
skin wife // to belong to anything but myself // there is not a potion that can unskin me //  
unwoman me // undo me // there is nothing that masks this holy // they're calling this //  
witchcraft

## STORM

*by Kait Quinn*

*@kaitquinnpoetry*

when she is weary and her eyes overflow  
into waterfalls into oceans and her body turns river rapid,  
threatening to suffocate her waning-moon soul,  
do not unplug the drain or sandbag the flood;  
do not pressure her blood to clot nor beg her tears to stop;  
for she was birthed from salt and needs high tide to heal—  
her heart needs not to numb but to feel, every ache, every storm,  
every lightning bolt and grain of salt in the wound.  
destroy not what she loves—everything is ephemeral.  
so let ocean choke the shore, let hurricanes run their natural course,  
but grease the cacophony of thunder cracks and bark snaps  
with honeyed tongue, remind her how to expand her lungs  
and breathe through the hail and howling winds,  
and stretch your hands over her limbs,  
umbrella her fragile bones with yours.  
do not drag her to sun-burned skies or thirsty land.  
let her burn and piece her ashes back to bone,  
let her work her pain into pearl,  
let. her. f e e l.  
and when she's ready,  
give her shelter from the storm.



*by Jade Ashleigh  
@jadeashleighart*

## THE WOMEN OF MY FAMILY

*by Zainab Hudha*

*@from.zainab*

her womb bouquets blooms,  
and chest the treasure of forgiveness.

these are not born out of histone proteins or the double helix;  
it comes from a place more sacred,  
*god.*

eyes aren't the only bearers of witness,  
look at her elbows, her flanks.

her strength is not found in the muscles and tendons,  
it comes from a place rawer,  
*lack, limitation, lovelessness.*

i can talk about silent suffering, the cycle of abuse, learned helplessness  
but she will not let me.  
i often froth in frustration  
because i want for her happiness and peace.

she takes my face between her palms  
and whispers about prayer,  
patience.

she gives what was owed to her.  
she feeds me the sky,  
in all its glory and fury.

i will have so much more to give.

## THIS BODY

by Karan Chambers  
@writer.interrupted

I have never thought of myself as  
strong. I have always been critical  
of my flaws, my faults, my  
weaknesses. Finding myself  
brittle. Not good enough. But...  
my body grew and birthed two babies:  
splitting itself open to bring them

*perfect*

into this world. My body nourished them with  
cracked and bleeding nipples – every latch  
agony – vicious red stripes spreading across  
hardened, heated breasts –  
two concrete slabs strapped  
to my chest. My arms rocked and  
carried, swayed and shushed endlessly in the  
darkness. My body kept going, legs holding  
me up even when I was stumbling from  
tiredness. Hair tangled in tiny fists,  
chest slept on, knees clung to, eyes shedding  
oceans that could have drowned me but  
didn't. My hands comfort,  
wipe away tears, stroke hair and  
soothe sweaty foreheads. My body sings,  
holds, envelops, cherishes, bends,  
breaks...?

Motherhood nearly shattered me  
– I lived in the fog for so long –  
but it hasn't.  
This body was your home and she is  
beautiful.  
I forget my fragility –  
it is love I am full of.

*(The lines: "She is more beautiful than I can remember" from Things We Had Lost in the Summer, Warsaw  
Shire, and "It is love you are full of" from Lesbos, Sylvia Plath)*

## IF I DIED RIGHT NOW: A TO DO LIST

*by Chip*

*@whentheersteeth*

tell my parents i was queer. just in case they forgot. tell everyone. bury me with my flag and a tuft of violets. bury me in a binder. with my heart on my sleeve. ask yourself "does this bitch look like they use they/them pronouns?" and add just a little

more of a touch of it. do not put a first name on my gravestone. unless all of my friends agree on one for me. put a list of everything i have ever wanted to engrave on my grave in it with me. tell my teachers i love them. tip my favourite poets. remind my aunt i have never been a girl. glare at my brother (alternatively; spit on him. alternatively do not let him look at me). remember to keep your pets happy. remember i was queer. remember

i loved you.

**THE STARS TELL ME I AM LOUD AND I REPLY: ALL I AM KNOWN BY IS THE LOUDNESS OF MY OWN WORDS NEVER MY VOICE YET IN THE PRESENCE OF TRAGEDY I AM FORCED TO SWALLOW THE SILENCE AND BECOME THE SHADOW SO I STAND TODAY AS THE SUN NEVER SETTING DOWN UNTIL MY SOUL SCREAMS MY SORROW IN INK AND TEARS BLEEDING THE ACHE: IT IS TIME FOR MERCY.**

After Maddie McGlinchey

by Zona

@zonathepoet

the stars tell me i am loud and i make their eyes witnesses to the chains around my throat/ in the cruel sentence that is my life these hands testify against the wrongings of my lovers' crimes/ my mother tongue pleads for freedom of my innocence as my faded words cost me this lifetime/ the stars tell me i am loud and i force their light to flame up the burning of my skin/ in the liveness that is my heart the fuel of their words gaslight my truth to ashes/ my brain is numb to the fire mistaking it as consuming warmth as i combust breathing the toxins of their torture/ the stars tell me i am loud and i show them how much of a mad woman i am/ in the chaos that is me i am loudness fire screams waves untamed/ my letters ricochet off my tongue and silence the lips of their weapons for i will not allow myself to die in the crossfire i was born into/ the stars tell me i am loud and i say can't you see this is me trying to find some peace/ in the home that is my body i have finally found me/ it began with clay but i will bury myself before i allow it to end this way/ the stars tell me i am loud and i agree screaming: *it is time for change, it is the time for mercy.*

## PERSEPHONE'S DAUGHTERS

*by Sreelakshmi Nair*

*@zianwrites\_*

Today I present you my womanhood as a personified feminine flower;

1) She is a ballerina who dances and dances and dances in full circles despite of the torn knee ligament that cries in pain and the only thing that keeps her feet anchored to the floor are the daisies her ankles bear. Daisies that bloom in chaos.

2) She is a widow who carries her heart in her knees, that scrapes against the asphalt every time she crawls and eats the last word of her husband's promise before she bleeds and her heart is at rest.

3) She is a woman whose body carries the beheaded versions of herself, beheaded because she is a woman and she is always wrong whilst he was the king of her kingdom.

Imagine this prose to be the heart of a woman that lies in the centre like a violin with worn out strings yet the melody fills the room .When I say woman or womanhood it's not soft or pink; its bloody red and hard. How we are Persephone's daughters, for somehow our childhood and innocence was abducted against our will yet here we are breathing having fought the ugliest battles and wearing the scars with pride.

My womanhood is a white hyacinth, now red and beautiful.



## ALTERNATE NAMES FOR BI GIRLS

After Danez Smith

by Lauren Poole

@laurenapoetry

1. river-mouth clay
2. the push-and-pull of the moon & tide
3. *which do you like more, though?*
4. a halved, ripe peach: soft & dripping gold
5. Persephone's love of both flowers & fire
6. *but if you had to pick one -*
7. the first dewy shards of dawn:
8. unseen & honey-tongued
9. blossoms sprouting through the snow
10. the moment a cherry bursts in the mouth
11. amethyst catching the light
12. Roman baths before the ruin
13. cave walls carved with utopias of unbridled want
14. an ochre paint-by-numbers:
15. never stays inside the lines
16. stories the television won't tell you
17. straight boys' porn-soaked fantasy
18. fairy path, not crossroads
19. elixir for anyone
20. often deemed mythical
21. & real, despite it all.



**DO YOU FEEL BIG? DO YOU FEEL POWER SEEPING THROUGH YOUR  
VEINS?**

*by Geneva Lark Hutchinson*  
*@genevalark\_*

## DYLAN

*by Samantha Nimmo*

*@sn.poetry*

Dylan's hands are gasoline and you're a live wire. Dylan walks you home and yells when he finds out you kissed your best friend two months before you met him. Dylan says he can't believe you'd ever kiss a girl. Dylan takes his jealousy and shoves it down your throat. Your neck burns and your jaw aches but Dylan says you're just being dramatic. Dylan's tongue is vodka and you're a lit match. Dylan kisses your neck and bites too hard. Dylan leaves scars in places you didn't know could be torn. Dylan rolls his eyes and grabs a tissue. Dylan cries when you tell him he's an asshole and agrees with you. Dylan says he hates himself and he doesn't deserve you but don't you know how much shit he's been through? You feel bad you always feel bad you don't remember when you last felt good. Dylan says kiss me. You kiss him. Dylan says love me. And you try you try but you're not sure love should bruise this much. You're not sure love should feel like an ache. Dylan drives you around in a beat up mini and punches your shoulder when he sees a yellow car. Your arm is numb but you know he's just playing. Your thighs burn but you know he doesn't mean it. Your stomach hurts but it was just an accident. Dylan says it's your fault, you're so beautiful, he just can't help himself. Dylan makes hot chocolate on the stove and fucks you on his parents' couch. Your name sounds like a curse in his mouth. You've stopped screaming his name and started screaming god's instead. You hope he's listening. You hope he believes you even though no one else does. Dylan breaks your heart when you ask him to treat you better. He spits on it and smashes it under muddy trainers. You cry at parties and dance under the moonlight with tears on your cheeks. You look at the stars and they rip themselves out of the sky to comfort you. You ask them if it hurt to leave their home. They say yes. They say it always hurts to leave the place you thought you loved. They say the pain fades fast though. The pain fades fast. And in its place is stardust. In its place is anger. In its place is hope.

## RAVAGED GODDESSES ARE REBORN AS 'MAD WOMEN'

*by Shayoni*

*@stressedmeowt*

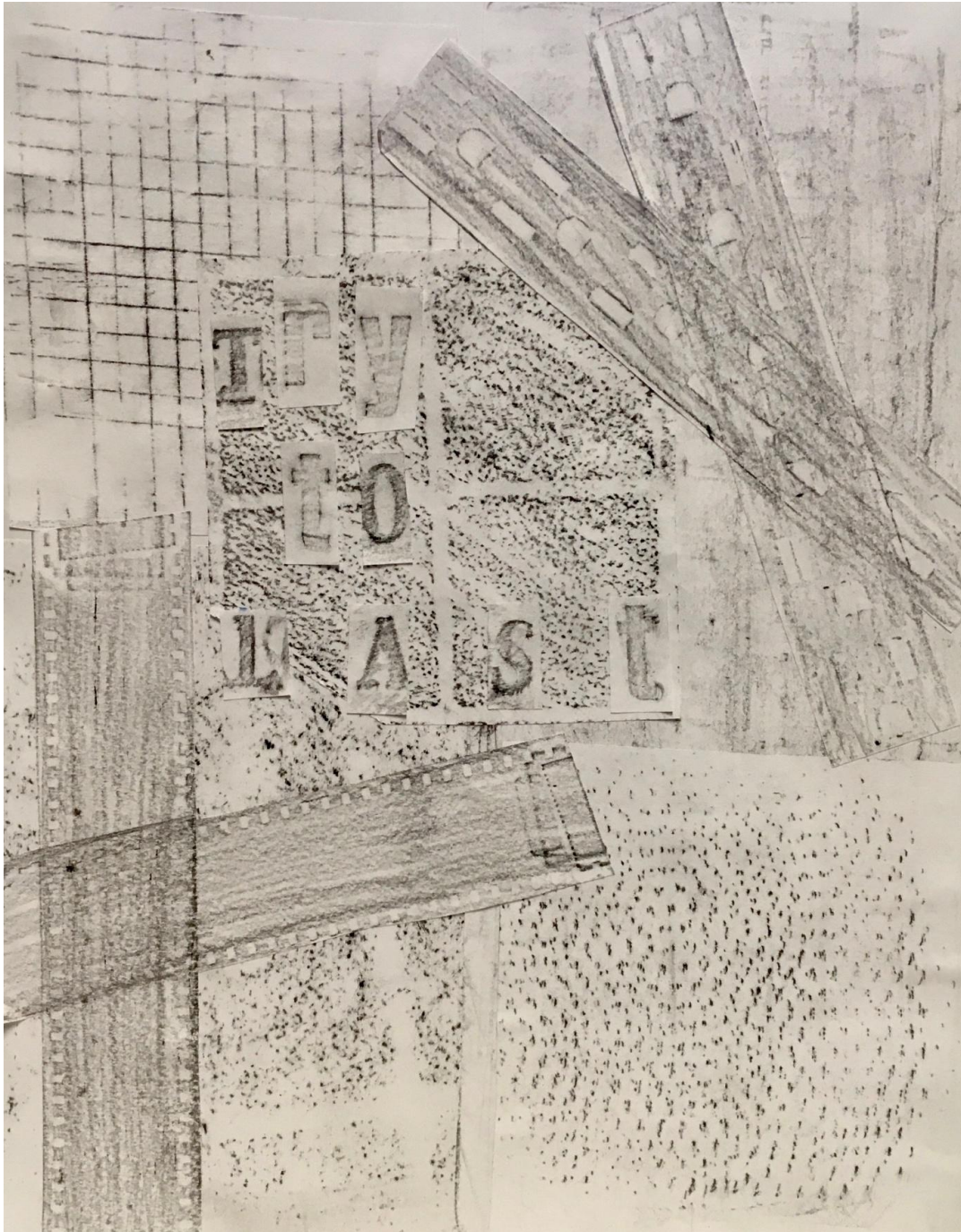
rumour has it that men and women are deaf. rumour has it that men and women are blind too.  
and  
their goddesses cannot  
read or  
right write. goddesses cannot scream while men thrust their lawful  
reign over the goddesses' temples.  
rivers of red gush down the streets when goddesses cry. and the mouths of men and women  
reek of excuses and euphemism. "oh, it is  
raspberry bit into, its pulp smeared on her cheeks and lips. she has always been sloppy, you  
know?  
she should be more careful, you know?" angry goddesses are labelled -  
"reckless rebels and renegades." angry goddesses seek  
refuge in radical rhapsodies. angry goddesses scream but their voice  
ricochets off patriarchal brick walls.  
religion is a farce and goddesses are not worshipped. goddesses are told to  
rehearse how to speak, what to say, how to sit, how to stand, how to smile graciously, how to be  
grateful for little morsels of bread and love quickly thrown in their mouth. asking for more is a  
punishable crime.  
rumour has it that men and women are deaf and blind. their goddesses are not illiterate, they  
now  
write poetry. their verses lie scattered like  
relics of a fallen empire made of bricks. it is time to  
rebuild. when goddesses are sick, they  
retch. they spit out your moldy pieces of bread and love. they untie  
ropes ribbons (sorry, i am still trying to unlearn speaking in euphemisms) and throw them out of  
windows. you tell them to pray to your god. sometimes, you tell them to pray to you. but the  
goddesses say that we are  
realising, revolting, redeeming, rebuilding, reconstructing, reconfiguring, resurrecting,  
reincarnating, rejoicing. the goddesses  
repeat after each other, "i don't know how to pray." like a prayer. the goddesses do not want a  
kingdom.  
rumour has it that the goddesses accept only  
respect as prayer.

## TELL ME ABOUT THE SKY AND THE HEDGEHOG

*by Jennie Louise*

*@words\_by\_jennie*

My pillowcase is wet;  
I'm having a panic attack again.  
Can you tell me about the sky  
to calm me down?  
You say 'the night air is crisp  
like diamonds, pressing down  
from the stars.  
That there's a hue on the horizon  
from streetlamps that make it look  
like the sun is already rising.'  
But it's only 1am-  
'There's a hedgehog under one  
of the bushes,' you say,  
'It's little nose, wet with shine,  
is poking out.'  
I meet you at the window and  
we watch the small creature  
in silence, a ball of spikes  
sneaking from one bush to another.  
When we return to bed,  
my breathing is slow and  
the pillowcase is dry again.



*by Katelyn Falconer*  
*@\_falconart*

**END**

*thank you for reading*