



where  
fire  
meets  
sky

*for those who dare to capture fragments of the human  
soul in lines and verse.*

# *preface*

*Where Fire Meets Sky* is a celebration of our voices — a gathering of words, feelings, and stories from the heart of our school. Within these pages, you'll find 46 poems, each one a spark that illuminates the depths of the human experience and the ways in which we each experience the world. Some voices are known; others are whispered in anonymity — but all are bound by the same passion: the power of poetry to capture what we cannot always say.

From lighthearted musings on love to the fierce, burning truths of heartbreak ; reflections on the human soul to the lives we yearn for ; the warmth of nostalgia to the cold clarity of justice — these poems are windows into our souls. They speak of the beauty and pain that are core to what it means to be human.

To every poet who shared their words with us — thank you. This anthology is only the beginning. May it inspire more voices to rise, and may the art of poetry continue to bloom in the years to come.

To you, reader, we share one final note:

***Carpe diem – seize the day.***

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# *chasing the pigeons*

Phineas Wilton

I am lying here,  
with my foot up in the stagnace,  
and longing for golden elms and  
striped shirts  
In their blotted light.  
And I long to chase the pigeons,  
to trip and fall among them,  
with their quiet preening and whistling departure.  
I long for the spring, when my breath is pollen-heavy,  
and I can smell November in the rain.  
I long for the world to be small;  
No thought of anything but the pigeons and their jeweled  
wings  
and the grass brushing by my feet.

I am not sure if I want to keep one  
and hold it in my striped breast pocket,  
Or if I chase them just to watch them glint at me in the  
light,  
And to revel in the smallness of it all.

# bus thoughts

Momina Khan

My hand brushes the metal of the bus frame,  
My thighs are stacked on top of each other,  
placed on the red seats of this rickety vehicle,  
I sit uncomfortably but with ease,  
Placing my thick headphones,  
which collide on the fabric of my scarf;  
But I turn them off, for today's bus is quiet and  
lacklusterly calm.

This leaves me to my thoughts,  
To the calls of the breeze,  
To the intricate carvings on the sidewalks,  
And the little conversations carried,  
along with slightly muffled sneezes.  
The sunlight blinds my eyes,  
Reflecting it's rays,  
And shining in the midst of the cloudy craze.  
I shut my eyes and think,  
think and think,  
And think,

And this thinking freezes me,  
Leaving me in this state of shock,  
Because in the light of the sun's bright shine,  
I think of the beauty of it's gaze and how,  
This warmth keeps me alive,  
The wavering trees hug me,  
tell me I can breathe,  
And the rivers flow with fresh, cold liquid,  
For me to replenish my needs and

I think about how this is love;  
To be on Earth, to be surrounded with this strength.  
And then my eyes open once more, and I notice  
Everything's got a bit more to love,  
So why do we keep loving it less?

# *purpose*

There is always a purpose,  
Something to hold onto, something to fulfil,  
Something worth more than you or I.

Would you lie to thyself?  
Or rather try be like yourself.  
Be brave,  
Or isolate yourself inside a fake cave.

Create a quote  
To be spoken  
Something you wrote to devote  
But Raise your words not your voice,  
It is rain that grows flowers not thunder

One day you may wake up, with a forgotten name  
Or decide to face the current pain  
Or else you will keep everything else the same

They say whatever ever doesn't kill you only makes you  
stronger,  
But it doesn't make your life any longer,  
Although it gives you a purpose  
Something to live for, something to pursue  
Something greater than yourself

The unlimited imagination of people,  
Where does it come from,  
Our education,  
No, information  
Actually maybe our situations

Imagination, untamed and free,  
Uncontrolled and beautiful  
It leads us to a stage of our own  
A show that has nowhere to go

There is no price on life  
Because of every single sacrifice  
Those that go unshown  
To those unsung heroes we may never know  
Who give every season  
And it is always within reason

All because of one thing  
A purpose  
Something to hold onto, something to fulfill  
Something greater than yourself  
Something more significant than us all  
Something unique, that is part of us and who we are.

## *little fawn*

Softer than a breeze,  
she sleeps like a natural spring,  
sparkling flowers  
taking shape of her wings;  
eyes that cherish such courage  
and ears that hear whispers of a Summer flourish.  
Through darkened branches,  
she crawls and she aches  
the calls to the forest  
that echo; untraced.  
Bones that crack, and shed her hurt,  
feet that crumble, twist and turn,  
entangled in a hush of an orchids bliss,  
a twilight lullaby and a shy crystal mist.  
The glow of the stars dances on her face,  
like golden slippers that twirl through space;  
a quiet hum flutters across the lake,  
she sighs to the moon,  
“I am tired of being brave.”

# *intangible*

There is very little which is  
Tangible in these contemporary times.  
Abstract wavelengths gracefully  
Dance in the theatre of the mind,  
Light-footed, captivating  
Spectral, all-encompassing.  
Numbing.  
The last time I can recall swallowing the  
World in its entirety was perhaps  
A crisp April morning  
Of yesteryear, cradling an ice lolly  
In the cup of my  
Hand as if it were the latchkey  
To some autumnal Avalon.  
I lifted it to my lips as a stranger  
Wended by, our eyes  
Briefly meeting. Fireworks of  
Raspberry and pineapple  
Leapt across my tongue and rushed  
All at once to my head.  
The biting air stung my nose,  
And time slowed its whistle-stop tempo  
To a warm Adagio. The drifter grinned.

A thunderbolt struck my very soul,  
Splitting the blue sky  
Into glassy shards.

I found myself carving a marble block  
Of possibility into a divine  
Approximation of his face. All in  
A moment I  
Chiselled a hundred Davids,  
A thousand Venuses, in worship of the  
Substantial, done in his unknown name.

The stranger went on his way,  
And the world ended, now lodged deep  
Into my larynx.

*I am drawn as  
Toxalkís's arrow  
To Psyche,  
Persephone to  
Asphodel fields.  
Corporeal muse,  
Paramour hidden from reason,  
Heed my hymn.  
Taste the  
Iced fruit  
Pressed against my  
Teeth.  
Return*

There is very little which is  
Tangible in these contemporary times,  
The world a senseless blur of light and motion.  
The taste of raspberry and pineapple  
Lingers on my lips, a receipt left too long  
In the back pocket which fades  
In the wash yet is otherwise intact.

The world holds no meaning  
If I am to never hold  
Such a moment in the palm  
Of my hand again,  
Weaving my fingers  
So tight that time shall never seep through.  
Allow me to worship my senses,  
Worship a stranger,  
Worship the world and the sum total of  
Being.

# *memento mori*

Chaandni

The moon did not exist before your soul did, I believe.  
If it did, did God put moon dust in the air that you  
breathe?

Your eyes, ya 3ayni, they demand  
Demand to be seen and spoken

Your voice ya Qalbi it glistens  
Cools like the river of kawthar

God made me a poet and did me great injustice  
When it comes to describing your soul He's rendered me  
a novice

There aren't enough words, enough languages to  
describe the smile in your eyes  
The way you look at me, the galaxies become shy

But I'm so scared of losing  
Outgrowing you, becoming lonely.

Does the soul live forever?  
Or doth thou memento mori?

# *an artist cannot be a muse*

Adiba Khan

apparently, an artist cannot be a muse,  
you told me once, on the blistering evening of january.  
turning the canvas in your hands,  
the way the moon turns its face from the tide,  
as if afraid of the reflection it might find.

you had already decided how you wished to be seen,  
and my brushstrokes withered midair,  
like petals curling at the touch of frost.  
as if your form was already traced in colour,  
as if no hand but your own could shape your light.

but what is a muse, if not the way the sun  
pours itself into the sea, never asking for return?  
if not the hush between notes in a song,  
the breath before laughter, the golden hush of dawn  
before the world remembers to be loud again?

you tell me you cannot be a muse,  
but you are written into every quiet thing—  
the spaces between my words,  
the echoes of laughter i hoard like rare coins,  
the way ink spills like secrets when i think of you.

perhaps i cannot paint you,  
but i will carve you into constellations of verse,  
write you into poetry until the words feel like home,  
until, one day, you look at yourself  
and finally see what i have seen all along.

hi

Chaandni

"Hi"

I say as I shake your hand,

"I'm Israth, may I have this dance?"

What's your favourite colour?

Favourite book, do you have a brother?

I'm 16

Oh, and you are too?

I like your nails,

You like my shoes.

We sit down,

I share my lunch with you

You like it?

Next time I'll bring two

You pay for me at the canteen

There's this new place, you ever been?

"No," I say

We go together

Talk about more than just the weather

I realise that

I'm just like you.

I send a reel

You send one too

We laugh a while

Then stare in silence

At our iPhone screens

There's still a while till

I double text, then three times  
Annoy you to show that you're worthwhile  
Worth unravelling the nonchalance  
Worth laughing till our breaths are gone

And at night I wish and wish and wish  
and you dictate to me your list  
of things you just can't wait to do  
A uni, a job, a car brand new

Exams go by on your shoulder  
We don't realise how much older  
We've gotten since our first dance  
Our feet are sore, our time has passed

I clap the loudest for your awards  
You clap for me and the cohort  
Stares at us  
"They're still together?"

Through thick and thin, through any weather  
We've traversed the most demanding seas  
Me with you  
you with me

I watch as you pocket your degree  
God won't split the sea for me  
Teary-eyed I ask again,  
"When will I see you next my friend?"

You shrug, I close my eyes and miss  
and miss and miss and miss and miss  
Until I open them to see  
A friendly face staring back at me

Now's the time I've got to choose  
I make my way across the room  
I tremble as I shake their hand  
"Hi I'm Israth, may I have this dance?"

*i hope this doesn't find you*

i hope this doesn't find you—  
not in the spaces between our words,  
not in the way my breath hitches  
when you laugh like the world is yours to hold.

i wanted to take this to my grave—  
to let my heart beat quietly, unseen,  
to lock away every almost, every ache,  
because you are my closest friend,  
and i am not supposed to love you.

i hope this doesn't find you—  
not in the way i memorise your voice,  
not in the way my silence stumbles  
whenever you speak of her.

but every other day,  
i want to let it slip between breaths,  
to let you hear the way your name  
has made a home in my throat,  
how it lingers, how it stays.

we talk about love like it's theory,  
like it's something distant, untouchable—  
but i am drowning in it,  
in midnight confessions that aren't mine to give,  
in the spaces between your words  
where i wish my name would live.

i hope this doesn't find you—  
not in the way I falter,  
not in the way my hands shake  
when i type and delete what I'll never send.

you speak of other girls,  
and I nod,  
offering empty smiles and borrowed advice,  
pretending my heart isn't unraveling  
one syllable at a time.

i know I shouldn't tell you.  
i know I never will.

but god, if you felt even a fraction of this—  
just enough to give me a reason to hope—  
i'd stop trying to bury it.

i hope this doesn't find you.  
and yet, every night,  
i wish it would.

*so soft; (i can almost feel it)*

i love	you
you	have changed me,
too much,	so when I look into the mirror
how is it?	I see but only you;
to grasp	the horizon that holds all that I am
and	the one to take me,
to see us	for what we are destined to be.
Here	with you, I stand and wish,
so soft	I can almost feel it.

*before I admit it,  
there will be a sign in my sheet music*

Draw a dot with a line, ♪  
to find a secret morse code message inside.  
It is in what my hands sign,  
like how a conductor tries.  
I hope the beat syncs your heart and mine,  
whether that be me keeping time,  
or what the swing in your hands underline—  
I'll let u be my conductor,  
for the rest of a lifetime.

Draw a dot with a line ♪  
to find a short secret morse code message aligned.  
S.O.S I sigh,  
the scratching of a record, back-tracking mementos in  
my mind.  
Because even if I could keep your voice on a vinyl,  
copying a clear recording of you live,  
I'd still rather be by your side,  
instead of playing it all the time.  
It would catch everything—  
like the melodic underlay of your lines.  
Yet not the hush from amusement in your chest,  
or simply the light in your eyes when my name tickles  
your breath.

Even in a thousand symphonies,  
I'd find yours, and then mine.

If anything, I hope I find them intertwined.  
We could walk together, always staying in time—  
step tandem on an imaginary line.  
In a heartbeat I could cross it,  
take your hand to cue.  
Start the music, conductor.  
My syncopated heart's asking you to.

*if you do.*

20 years from now,  
there will be calm  
and an inunduating quiet.  
somewhere in New York,  
I will be writing.

And maybe I will find you,  
in the dedications of my memoir;  
or in the margins of my stories,  
or in the glow of the stars.

Do you grieve what I do?  
We had so much to say,  
and so much to lose,  
from acid stained sheets  
to practiced “I do”s

I’ll stare out the window,  
feel you in the breeze,  
I’m sure you have children  
and a dog that barks at the trees,

But if you happen to miss me,

Rest your head on my chest  
when the world feels too heavy  
I wont forget to tell you  
to take it slow, when you’re ready,

Everything is too small for me, you see,  
you bring me alive,  
all I can be,  
we'll talk a little while,  
or forever;

If you miss me.

# *past the meadows*

Chaandni

The blushing meadows part  
leaving room for two to dance

A friend in need  
Is a friend indeed

Be it by fate  
Or chance

I love not the blistering rain  
But with you I'd dance for hours

I would spin and dance and shout,  
Amongst dull bouquets of flowers

I love not the scent of daisies  
I find it saccharine

I, quite frankly, despise them  
But for you I suppose they're fine

And when the rain delays,  
I would pray for a speck or drop

I haven't heard from you in days  
Past the meadows, the laughter stops.

## *in quiet admiration*

Heed me, I speak with purest affection,  
Her countenance seeming a deep red rose.  
Consider her kind lustrous perfection  
And thus she remains eternal in prose.

Perhaps a wistful gaze peers through the lens,  
Her hair is streaked with those bright golden locks.  
And while violent, my longing heart she rends,  
My love for her a ship wading new docks.

Her fair face a gale of radiant shine,  
Her demeanour embodies the gracious.  
I hope our fates will someday align,  
Though my love is considered audacious.

And here my fondness should tragically end,  
As I must forever remain a friend.

*your name*

Minn Wright

When I think  
Your name  
It comes with regrets,  
Baggage,  
Words from other's mouths to describe  
How I feel when I'm with you.  
It comes with all the bittersweet longing  
Of what used to be there  
And what still is

(I wish it weren't)  
(I wish it were simple)  
(I wish we were on the same page)  
(Wish when I mention you I didn't get a pang of what  
could have been)  
(What we could have been)

And when your name fills my head  
So often,  
Clouds my vision  
At a flower, or a song, an idea  
Those syllables are summoned  
"You would like this", I think  
"You would know what I mean"  
"You would sit with me  
And bring these thoughts to reality"  
When all I see is you  
I can't move forward

But when you are right in front of me,  
When I see your face, hear your voice,  
Think of you  
In all you are  
Not just some  
Letters on a page

When the words clear away it all seems easy  
And  
It doesn't matter what I haven't told you,  
What I wish I told you,  
That it's too late.  
It doesn't matter the words  
Put in place of a feeling  
Or of a memory

It matters only that  
You are here, now,  
And so am I,  
And our laughter fills the sky.

# *To Love a queen*

Oscar Ha

Your pretty jewels adorned with pretty gold,  
Like a diadem that frames your head.  
That looks upon people with not only benevolence  
But also balmy graciousness.

Because even if you are not royalty,  
Your grace wraps around you like a velvet cloak.  
A sovereign soul both kind and true,  
Has come to save me.

But I know your deep and grand eyes sweep the  
kingdom,  
Looking for the next prince.  
As while I have the sword to protect you,  
I lack the crown to have you.

So I'll keep my vows in silence  
Content to guard, not to possess.  
You chase a fate I cannot share,  
And I'll forever remain just one step less.

# *Love poem*

Phineas Wilton

It is that regretful salt  
that swims around my ankles.  
The awful grey stuff  
that splatters onto the roof and and my hands  
and hardens into stalactites.

It is that quiet slumber and the yellow bicycle I ride to  
meet him  
at the edge of that huffing, grey-faced field.  
The earth between us is as fleeting  
as he is.  
I cannot decide yet if he is there;

It is that shame  
that makes the space around him so interesting.

The twisted corner of his mouth is the last turn onto my  
street,  
and I sway to the side on my booster seat.  
I shut my eyes tight  
against the evening through the window  
and I am carried inside by my father.

## *mandarins*

The manner in which I  
Still love you  
Lies under the membrane  
Of the Mandarin,  
Seeping deep beneath  
The flesh.  
I crush a section of the  
Delicate fruit beneath  
The heel of my  
Palm, staining the  
Blanched tabletop.  
My veins are acidic  
With longing,  
Orange with envy.

The manner in which I  
Still love you  
Lies in the bitter, small  
Seeds which I  
Nearly choke on, snagging  
On the walls of  
My constricted  
Esophagus. The taste of  
Iron trickles into  
My fragile lungs.  
If I am not careful,  
God will crush me  
Beneath the heel of his palm  
And I will stain acidic  
Orange upon  
Your blanched heart.

# *untitled (yearning)*

Take a torch to my ribs and  
Char them to the very marrow.  
Peel back the burnt, damaged  
Bone to reveal the beating,  
bleating,  
bleeding heart embedded beneath.  
Sink your teeth into the flesh and  
Devour it whole. I am not haute  
cuisine, artistic and deliberate.  
I am raw, I am red, I am begging  
For your enamel to scrape  
Against my arteries before  
Plunging into my aorta, ripping  
It wide open for the world to  
See. You are Bacchus,  
Seeking wine within  
My veins, and I am only a  
Maenad, so feverish for you that  
The sap I have for blood  
Ferments in my ecstasy to  
Serve you. To be loved, to  
Be intimate, to be vulnerable-  
That is the greatest form  
Of violence above all.  
Take a torch to my ribs and  
Char them to the very marrow-  
It is in the torrefied tissue  
Where you will find me,  
Truer than my face and purer  
Than my birth.

*they should make the ocean make you  
forget yourself*

The last time I went to the beach I didn't dip my feet in. I didn't know we would stay there, so I followed and I followed to the dock. The water was green near the shallow end. Women tanning, lying on the ground skin turning orange like clockwork. Half naked people as far as I could see and I wanted to disappear, for some reason. The ocean lay where it was, shifting. I wanted to go in.

The last time I went to the beach I didn't get to step into the sand. Let the sediment shift around my feet, barefoot. Feel the rock burn my skin and scald it. I want it to leave a mark so that when I'm old and miss the seaside I can see, clearly see, where I let it burn—where it claimed me as part of itself, as part of the beach, as part of the greater world I can't really feel unless I step outside for a longer period of time than the moments it takes to lift laundry off the hanger.

The last time I went to the beach I still missed you. I still thought we'd have forever. I still thought I'd get to see you again. I still thought I'd be able to take you by your hand, your lovely, wonderful hand and drag you out to the water, dip our feet in like toddlers touching the ocean for the first time, burn our feet like we don't know any better and hold your face with my wet sandy hand and look at you, softly, sweetly. Count your freckles by the beach and there would be nothing else I'd ever need.

The next time I go to the beach I will try and try and try to think about myself, about the present, about the sweet moments in between the falling of sunlight and salty wind. Smell the fries left over on the sidewalk ready and ripe for a seagull to pick and try and try and try not to think about year six where we shared a cup of hot chips on the stairs to our classroom. It will drizzle softly, gently, and I will cup the rain in my hands and try and try and try not to think about how I've been wanting to hold you like this for two years, how i held my jacket over both our heads three years ago when water fell from the sky the same way.

I will try, and I will try, and I will try to think of someone else. Or better yet—to not think at all. You know me. You know that's impossible.

- 21.2.25

# *i'm worth something*

Sumaira Alam

Although my disgusting body is undeserving of love  
You gently reach out your merciful hand from above  
Opening the carmine mass embedded within my  
structure,  
I'm worth something when you eat until my arteries  
rupture

Black bile is like candied licorice between your teeth  
Our special ritual leaving me unable to breathe  
Isn't it delicious? That's the taste of a warm heart  
I'm worth something when you and I are never apart

I want to go home, the life drains from my soul as you  
consume me  
But together we have built a garden out of all that is  
unholy  
My name burnt into Mama's throat as countless nights  
pass without me  
I'm worth something when I'm with you, but... I yearn to  
be free

If I ever told anyone, you told me Mama would have to  
die  
As you savour sinew and sanguine all I can do is comply  
Because I don't understand, all I know is that you love  
me  
I'm worth something when I'm nothing but your loyal  
devotee

My salvation, my redemption, my everything  
All of my essence slides down your throat as tears in my  
eyes sting  
Tasting wretched flesh as my pitiful self unravels on your  
tongue  
I'm worth something when you and I become one

# gravebound

Ria Sharma

In this moonlit grave I lie in wait,  
Beneath this earth lies my  
tragic

fate,  
Underneath the moon,  
God why didn't I pick this so soon,  
His mistress,  
That citrus trail,  
Her poison,  
sweet,  
Lingering still where  
"friends"

meet.  
Sure,  
divorce  
works,  
Heartbreak

works  
But blood  
runs deeper than the law  
As I suffer  
from  
their coquettish  
flaw

Praying for my demise  
As I mumble my teary goodbyes  
As worms feast where love  
once thrived

Yet I do not rest,  
The earth is            patient,  
and so am I –  
One day, my anguished sigh,  
Will slip,  
Beneath their bedroom  
door,  
And I think he will know–  
That I  
Will wait for my            vengeance  
Once more.

# dishes clean

**you and me, maybe we can keep the dishes  
clean?**

on this serene evening, let's not go beyond this feeling,  
we only met each other when we were twenty or  
something.

to prevent our lips from colliding, our souls from  
tangling in sin,  
you searched for eternity in my chocolate eyes,  
flashing your wicked smile, as life's knot we'd spin.

you wanted the fire of passion to set your heart aflame,  
i yearned for the cool water to heal my scars of pain.  
are we back to square one?  
no friend to congratulate, no wedding to celebrate.  
we coloured the white picket fence green,  
and destroyed the suburban dream.

i fought my whole life to be free.  
to break the cage and fly away,  
but your wistful gaze made me stay.  
to crash back onto earth and hope for yet another sunny  
day

so here we are,  
broke but dreamy on the night of our marriage.  
takeout and laundry with no sign of a ring nor carriage.  
you promised me escape from this nine to five hell,  
but between us, there is a sink full of unpaid bills.

**hey so, maybe we can keep the dishes clean?**

to wipe the stain of the past from this white porcelain?  
forget who we were yesterday,  
remove the tears that led us astray.  
no need to dig through my foggy mind for a lucky find,  
you'll only get lost in the tragedies without a guide.

would you still embrace me in my naked bones,  
a heart too weak to hug and hold?  
can you handle a broken soul,  
or would you run away without your gold?

gold; that's what you are to me,  
my jewel that i'd wear for the whole world to see.  
despite watching your inner child with a dream so wild,  
a lonely while with no one to reconcile.  
the starry night where you were left cold,  
the violent ordeal that made you love in bold.

i see all of you at 3 AM,  
cause you're a dream I can't condemn.  
a whispered secret in the dim,  
where all that's real starts to swim.

**so would you *kindly* keep the dishes clean?**

for the dishes are the first thing we do as 'you and me'.  
no coffee rich enough to stain our mugs,  
no ink deep enough to smudge the story of us.

we were not meant for the  
american dream, the marriage ring, the typical fling.  
they said our heads were in the clouds,  
but they were too afraid to think different from the  
crowd.

the stove won't light fireworks and the clothes won't fold  
the tides.  
how will we know of paradise if we don't dare to go  
outside?  
the tears break free as you admit that i'm your only  
family,  
so why not trust me, when I say that this life is for us to  
flee?

be anything but ordinary, erase "fear" from your  
dictionary  
don't you believe that we're visionary?  
run away on the cusp of dawn, catch that train before the  
time is gone.  
you will feel this palpable tension,  
as it leads us to the sixth dimension

doesn't it sound so alluring?  
a line in the books and all that glory?  
we chased the stars, a boundless scene,  
but wait...

**did you forget to keep the dishes clean?**

# *schooling in hoppers crossing*

Samika Kala and Nayssa Kapadia

My life is a tossing,  
For I go to school in Hoppers Crossing.  
The teachers always bossing,  
my brain cells are mossaing,  
children are in their seats-tossing.  
The teachers avidly crossing.  
For I go to school in hoppers crossing.

Being in Hoppers Crossing-i would rather not be  
Pondering-to be or not to be  
Endless hours of study,  
it's a difficult life you see.

Balancing time on our shoulders  
It's like carrying a boulder.  
In our hands, the subject folders.  
Removed from our faces, our smolders  
The endless days just get colder

Behind the tree  
And I think to me,  
to be or not to be.

So help me, I feel like a fool  
For this mundane world, I'm too cool.  
For I go to school,  
in Hoppers Crossing.

# *Love, loss, and the tragic decline of my bank account*

Mihir Soni

Oh, mighty dollar, crisp and green,  
The finest bill I've ever seen.  
You lived so briefly in my hand,  
Then left me for a soda can.

I swore to save, I made a plan,  
But here I am—a broke, sad man.  
Coffee? Snacks? A game or two?  
Now my wallet's empty too.

Oh dollar dear, you were my last,  
Yet you disappeared so fast!  
If only you had stuck around,  
I wouldn't be so debit-bound.

But worry not, I'll make it through—  
Till payday comes... in a week or two.

The End.

# oh noble charger

Mihir Soni

Faithful, unyielding, ever-glowing beacon of power...  
Your light once shined bright,  
guiding me through late-night essays,  
sustaining me in my darkest, *Wi-Fi-reliant* hours.

But I was careless.  
I took you for granted.

I yanked when I should have been gentle.  
I twisted when I should have respected your form.  
I jammed you in sideways when I knew well that was  
NOT how physics works.

And now, you are gone.

Was it the reckless yanks?  
The mindless shanks?  
The relentless 87-degree bends?  
We may never know.

But today, I sit...  
laptop at 3%...  
darkness closing in...

My homework? Lost.  
My future? Uncertain.  
My teacher? Unforgiving.

Oh charger, dear charger...  
I should have wrapped you properly.  
But now?

It's too late.

# *our shining star*

Angelo Benjamin

Vivid and bright, purple and gold  
The colours worn in gods' robes  
Our king is brave and bold  
A shining star, a beacon of hope

Such aura and nonchalance  
Never care, like a cavalier  
Will I ever get a chance  
To be at his side, or at his rear

At all times, he's stood strong and tall  
Even when faced with defeat  
It's a way of life, his ball  
Arrive again, arrive with heat

Such immense love for the way  
His roars can be heard beyond acres  
His glory extends beyond the game  
I never thought I'd love a Laker

A shining star, truly our sunshine  
From humble beginnings in Ohio, Akron  
Getting better with age, like the finest of wines  
I'll never forget our sweet Lebron

# *Love, ruin, repeat.*

Vanalika Puri

the tragedy of the human heart  
lies in the monstrosity of its beauty.

its beauty, in the wretched anguish  
left in the wake of hands stained vermillion  
with the blood of your deepest love ;  
in the scars that litter where you tore through the skin  
of he who knew you truest ;  
in the destruction you caused  
by simply trying to *hold on*.

its beauty, in the void  
that lingers in the silence  
of the empty memory of a voice that no longer resounds,  
and that still, you refuse to forget.

its beauty, in an all-consuming grief  
that envelops you fully  
and paints your world a morbid shade of gray,  
yet is a promise of how you *loved*.

its beauty, in how we must *burn*  
just to know that we are *alive*.

its beauty, in that we are all our own kaleidoscope,  
built of shifting shapes and vibrant colours,  
no two ever truly the same.

always moving into new beautiful pictures —  
except for when yours turns  
and suddenly  
you are someone who i hold close  
but no longer recognise.

its beauty, in how we must steal something pretty that we  
see —  
pick a flower, only to gift to someone we love ;  
pluck it from life,  
if only to gift another a smile.

beauty in the way that the human heart consumes ;  
affliction in that the story *didn't have to end this way*,  
and tragedy in that the story *would have always ended  
this way*.

because humans are inherently destructive creatures,  
and so we paint our lives with ironies  
to give meaning to the love in our hearts.

we crave beauty like the air in our lungs  
but must sabotage something pretty  
to consider it beautiful.

the human heart is not delicate, and it is not dainty —  
the human heart throbs violently  
propelling towards those that it chooses to keep close.

but perhaps love is nothing but a cycle  
of life and of death;  
of the loved and of the loving.

maybe we are only searching  
for someone who unafraid  
to embrace the darkest corners of our soul.

perhaps it is not a tragedy that the beauty of the heart is  
monstrous,  
but rather a blessing — *that the heart finds beauty even  
in monstrosity.*

# *a map of my mind*

Chaandni

A lock so hefty even I often give up  
The door's in a forest of impertinent thoughts  
Tangled in belladonna more often than not

If you get close enough you might find a heather  
Hidden in nettle and mercurial weather  
A vibrant garden, a deceptive symbol  
The wolfsbane is dressed as bluebell, don't dwindle

To open my brain, I've found if you're patient  
Bring with you a pansy and after great observation  
The door might creak open just enough to reveal  
A father, a mother, and a curious ordeal

A meek little girl stands holding a daisy  
She's frightened at first, hurried and hasty  
She tugs on the door but if you're gentle enough  
She'll give you a kiss complete with a hug.

# the nothing space

Adiba Khan

they say the present is the only reality, yet i'm never truly **here**.

my body stands at the corner of a street i don't remember walking to,  
feet planted, hands steady, but my mind—  
my mind is slipping between time zones of memory and maybe.

somewhere, i am seven, rain-soaked and laughing,  
spinning until the world blurs into watercolor.  
somewhere, i am fifteen, tracing bones in the mirror,  
wondering if vanishing is the same as becoming.  
somewhere, i am a future i have yet to reach,  
a ghost haunting the life i am still trying to build.

the bus hums beneath me, a lullaby of motion,  
but i am not a passenger—just a thought in transit.  
not past, not future, just *here*, in the nothing space,  
where clocks tick but time does not move.

is this existence? this waiting, this lingering,  
this ache of being without belonging?  
if now is all that is real,  
then why does it feel like nothing at all?

# marketplace

Phineas Wilton

Cathy's selling her grandmother's teacup saucers with  
the willow pattern on them,  
and Maurice smokes an Indonesian clove cigarette  
waiting for the people  
carrying bags as full as their eyes,  
jackets like the Michelin man's.  
Andrew sells a mixture of war medals that don't belong  
to him and CDs of the music he listened to in high school  
while the passers-by pretend to read books,  
and the wind thinks about blowing itself away.  
Lianne winces into her Metamucil capsules with her back  
teeth  
shattering like dry clay  
and Craig strokes his beard that only grows from his  
neck, and only when he prays.  
The cars from the next street over whistle their same old  
tune;  
cold and crisp,  
will-o-wisp.  
The crowd hush and itch the ground,  
nobody buys Cathy's teacups,  
and dawn  
was hours ago.

*what happened here?*

What happened here?

An empty bed, blankets strewn across the mattress,  
clothes messily stuffed under the pillow.

What happened here?

A messy room, just as empty as the bed, cold and  
unoccupied

What happened here?

An abandoned street, no cars, no pedestrians, no life  
except for the unkempt plants.

What happened here?

An untenanted neighbourhood, no one is there, no one  
will ever come back.

What happened here?

A deserted town, every inch devoid of life, any animals  
wiped out by mysterious forces, any people evacuated.

**What happened here?**

# *Mary Street*

Phineas Wilton

1.

The beef stew is cold and curls into the air.  
Her voice is a polished stone,  
He's sleeping by the garden.

My pen snags and tears black ink into the newspaper.

2.

The cliff is white and warm and beating a rhythm.  
He's getting his last rights,  
I'm waiting for a signal. When it  
comes, the priest is getting into his Honda Civic.  
The water wicks and smiles away into the wind, too calm  
and perfect,  
and the snowmelt wavers in my vision.  
It whips away anything left here, above the sky.

3.

The funeral home have their own tissues that say that  
they're family too,  
and they practice their pensive look  
as they wheel him out from the fridge.  
The lights sing like steel.  
He looks so heavy, yet  
his coffin rolls out like nothing at all  
as he lies with his eyes hollowed  
in his polo shirt.  
A cicada clings to him,  
waiting to climb.

4.

His chair sits upon itself, a temple.

The stove curdles the air and we lumber in like smoke-plastered bees.

The handles of the spoons are all placed the wrong way,  
and

The Virgin Mary leans to the side.

# *what keeps you up at night?*

Adiba Khan

what keeps you up at night?  
is it the one that slipped through your hands,  
the unpaid bills that still demand,  
or the helpless souls you left unmanned?

does it make you nervous pondering this question,  
the fragile threads of life's progression?  
the dreams deferred, the paths not taken,  
the silent echoes that leave you shaken?

because what keeps me up at night are these epic bursts  
of epiphanies.  
fireworks - of thoughts and bright symphonies.  
each spark a question, wild and fierce,  
a glimpse of truths they barely pierce.  
they flare, they fade, but in their flight,  
they haunt my mind throughout the night.

the big bang's roar, the stars that gleam,  
what came before, what's still unseen?  
do i search for god in the folds of space,  
or in ancient pages, lost in time and place?

is this all illusionary, a dream we've spun so tight?  
did we create god because we became lonely in the night?  
is faith a tool of power, or a truth we cannot see,  
and are we just the puppets in this grand mystery?

but what are the chances, the odds so small,  
for life to emerge from nothing at all?  
does the universe bend by some unseen force,  
or is it chaos, with no real course?

well, it's a spark that starts the war,  
god made man, or man made more?  
for all we claim, we might be wrong,  
no soul can sing the song of what's beyond.

who pulls the strings, who writes the play—  
is free will ours, or just display?  
what if the truth is just a disguise?  
woven by those who control the skies?

are we the makers of our fate,  
or bound by laws we can't translate?  
because how can we trust in reality,  
when the victors wrote our history?!

so sleep, my dear child, and close your eyes,  
let the questions fade as the silence sighs.  
watch that last firework, and let it gleam,  
for truth is found in the depths of your dreams.

# my thing

Momina Khan

There's this 'thing', I fail to name,  
That follows me through every day.

One leg jittering harshly,  
It lays beside me,  
Invincible and invisible,  
Pestering my mind with the day behind me.  
This 'thing' makes my heart go;  
ThUmP, thump, THUMP,  
As if it has no brakes.

I laugh and I yelp and  
This distresser doesn't enjoy the mood,  
It overhears my words;  
In panic, adds a couple too many more too,  
A few things I didn't want to say  
But impulsively, I did.  
This 'thing' then scratches and bleeds my head,  
Weathered and weak,  
I leave the rest unsaid.

Curled like a crescent i lay on my bed, and,  
Crouching at the corner of the room,  
Poking my heart with daggers and chains  
Gnawing at the arteries and veins,  
Again and again I hear,  
With pain in my blood,  
this...thing biting at my cheeks.

When hysterical floods flow it consoles me,  
And with its sinister warmth it attracts me,  
But with its sharp stings it stabs me,  
And I now stay jammed in the blades.

But even with this heavy 'thing' I hold,  
Other 'things' stand beside me,  
Like the ones that lift me up,  
Lighten my face,  
Love quietly.

So with this thing that I have,  
And will forever hold,  
I still carry on each day,  
Marching on,  
Shoulders hunched,  
With my heavy heart and soul.

# *the night man*

Phineas Wilton

The man will come in a pinstripe suit,  
in his ragtag garb with a wooden flute.  
The hound dogs will come at five,  
and watch with those hazel-collared eyes; the man  
laid out on the asphalt like that,  
with his yellowed hands and paper hat.  
And he will tell them with his evening tongue  
the words that silver gods have sung.  
The trucks will sway with verve  
by the curbside's gentle curve,  
And the road will bleed against his back,  
silent stones bruised blue and black.  
The neon smothers with its gentle hum;  
in a pinstripe suit,  
The man will come.

# what does it feel like to die?

Adiba Khan

a wise man, tyson, once said,  
*"it's the exact feeling you felt when you were not born."*

as if death is a hollow pocket,  
a breath that never was,  
a door that never opens nor closes,  
just the absence of footsteps in an untouched room.

but how can that be?  
how can i be cradled in nothingness  
when i have been everything—  
when i have bled and laughed and ached,  
when my hands have held the weight of the world,  
when my voice has kissed the air with words too heavy to  
stay?

no, to die is not to return to before.  
before, i was a whisper not yet spoken,  
a story without ink,  
a sky waiting for its first thunder.  
but now—now, i have lived.  
i have worn the sun in my hair,  
let love carve its name into my ribs,  
let sorrow stitch constellations into my skin.

to die is not to fade into silence,  
but to dissolve into a thousand echoes—

the wind that hums through restless trees,  
the warmth that lingers in an old lover's hands,  
the flicker in a poet's candle as they write me into a  
verse.

the body may fall like a forgotten star,  
but the light it cast will burn on,  
scattered across time,  
woven into the fabric of all that remains.

so no, death is not the nothing before birth—  
it is the everything after life,  
a final breath that does not vanish,  
but unfurls into the universe,  
whispering—**i was here.**

x. 1325

Chaandni

God painted galaxies on my hands  
God I really hate them

Why couldn't he have sculpted me from porcelain?  
So I could look into the mirror again

God made so much of me to love  
I wish He'd made me smaller

He made me to look up at Him  
Yet I wish He'd made me taller

Am I not as lovable  
As a girl the opposite of me?

Am I not as beautiful  
Though we were both sculpted by He?

x

# *fire*

Vanalika Puri

i was born into a home of warmth.

light filtered the halls through the half open curtains  
a soft amber glow illuminating every corner  
replacing the wintery chill of loneliness with the gentle  
simmer of love.

but as time passed and the seasons began to turn  
the heat grew stronger  
and the once cozy autumn rays  
became the fervour of the stifling summer sun.

slowly at first, but then much faster  
walls came ablaze and the floor began to collapse;  
a searing inferno that promised to scorch all that fell in  
its path  
with the echoes of screams and words not said —  
melting broken hearts and broken bottles into the same  
jagged lines.

you fell in love with each others flowers, but forgot to  
nurture your roots  
and so when autumn came around you didn't know what  
to do.  
so you did the only thing you knew —  
lit your own world alight in hopes that it would help  
rekindle a love burnt out.

so now i stand and watch the blaze, left numb to the  
burning sensation shackling my feet.  
i stand in place to wait to see the embers that land upon  
my eyelashes  
before i must accept the empty wreck that i am to inherit.  
i stand and watch as it all burns down,  
hoping that when i one day look in the mirror  
it will not be glimpses of your faces that i see staring back  
at me.

yes, i may have been born into a home of warmth,  
but i was raised in the carcass of a burning flame.

# *when did we forget to care?*

Adiba Khan

when did we forget to care?

was it when we learned to count coins before names,  
to measure worth in figures instead of faces,  
to build walls higher than we built homes?

was it when a girl whispered **no** into the dark  
and the world answered with silence,  
with doubt, with questions about the length of her skirt  
instead of the weight of her fear?

was it when hunger became a crime,  
when empty hands reached out and met nothing  
but the cold steel of a closing door?  
When we stopped asking why a child has to beg  
and started blaming them for being born poor?

was it when war became routine,  
when bombs fell like clockwork  
and grief became just another statistic?  
when we taught boys to hold rifles  
before they learned to hold kindness in their hands?

when did we decide that bodies were markets,  
that pain had a price tag,  
that medicine was only for those who could afford to  
suffer?  
that a mother should have to choose  
between feeding her children and keeping them alive?

when did we start mistaking survival for justice?  
when did we start calling cruelty "just the way things  
are"?

we were not born this way.  
we were not made for indifference.

so tell me, when did we forget to care?  
and what will it take for us to remember?

# *the Land*

Chaandni

The place where walls would whisper us stories and the  
trees would dance despite their roots,

Where tired eyes host welcoming smiles while labouring  
legs quiver in broken boots

The sun paints portraits across the valleys and the sea  
sings songs that silence poets

The hearts of the people are planted with olives in the  
soil they bravely protest against rockets

The footsteps of prophets maimed by the footsteps of  
soldiers

Their army like sisyphus, rolling the boulder

The children cry as nights get colder

Inflicting wounds incurable by plasters  
Free Palestine until it's backwards.

# *not for the dreamers*

Adiba Khan

## **my motherland is not for the dreamers.**

not for the ones who march through Dhaka's streets,  
who shout for justice in the monsoon heat,  
who paint their slogans red with pride,  
but vanish when the tides subside.

they filled Shahbagh, they raised their hands,  
they choked on tear gas, scorched the land,  
but power grinned, the batons fell,  
and hope was dragged to prison cells.

## **my motherland is not for the dreamers.**

for those who trust the river's call,  
the Padma flows but feeds them small,  
as nets run dry and waters choke,  
while ferries sink in currents broke.

does the fisherman's cries reach his allies?  
his boat drifts slowly, beneath the skies.  
the wind may howl, the waves may break,  
but he must sail, for his family's sake.

## **my motherland is not for the dreamers.**

for those who sew from dusk till dawn,  
in factories where nights are long,  
where needles pierce, the wages thin,  
but stitched-up hands still pull the string.

the walls may crack, the floors may shake,  
but hunger bends, it does not break,  
a girl of twelve learns not to cry,  
for work is life—no time to die.

**my motherland is not for the dreamers.**

for rickshaw men who ride through rain,  
who fight the floods, ignore the pain,  
whose weary feet still push ahead,  
while passengers look straight ahead.

they weave through crowds, through horns and smog,  
through broken roads and call to god,  
their backs are bent, their shirts are torn,  
but still, they ride through streets war-worn.

**my motherland is not for the dreamers.**

for girls who dream beyond their fate,  
but learn too young it's far too late,  
a father signs, a mother cries,  
a gold-wrapped curse in bridal ties.

at thirteen years, she leaves her home,  
a child in silk, yet all alone,  
her books replaced by pots and fire,  
her world reduced to just "yes, sire."

**my motherland is not for the dreamers.**

for poets lost in tea stall smoke,  
who sip their cha, who write, who choke,  
who quote Tagore with fire bright,  
but know their words won't start a fight.

yet still, they fight, they work, they weave,  
they build, they break, they rise, they grieve,  
they find a way, they still survive,  
for here, the dreamers stay alive.

**my motherland is not for the dreamers.**

it is for the fighters, the hopeless schemers,  
who rise each day to face the fight,  
with hearts so strong but dimmed by night.  
and though you might not see it clear,  
this land of rivers, dreams still near.

for those who dream of skies so wide,  
but find their wings are locked inside,  
for here, the air is thick with chains,  
and hope dissolves in summer rains.

**my motherland is not for the dreamers.  
but it is home to the survivors.**

2015.

Adiba Khan

i was seven once,  
when summers stretched wide like open arms,  
when time dripped slow like mango juice  
down sticky fingers,  
and the sun wasn't yellow—it was **gold**.

bangladesh breathed in colors then,  
monsoon skies rolling in stories,  
festival nights bursting like fireworks in my veins.  
barefoot races through wet grass,  
where green was greener,  
where laughter was louder,  
where the air smelled of sugar and dust.

where cousins gathered cross-legged on the floor,  
fingers stained with jackfruit, hearts wild with victory.  
the ludo board became a battlefield,  
dice clattering like drums of **war**.

And in a dimly lit room, we watched the cricket world  
cup,  
uncles on seat's edge, hope teasing our eyes.  
every loss, every silence that felt heavier than the heat,  
a dream slipping through our hands like sand.

when the whole neighborhood was swallowed by the  
night,  
candles flickered like ghosts on the walls.  
we didn't **mind**.

the stars burned brighter without the hum of electricity,  
and we sat close,  
telling stories that only made sense when **whispered**.

and when the rain came,  
it wasn't just water—it was **music**.  
pavements turned to rivers beneath my feet,  
and i danced, twirling in the downpour,  
barefoot, breathless, **alive**.

evenings belonged to rusty swings and **unburdened**  
**joy**,  
to the echoes of laughter  
from voices that now speak of deadlines and worries.  
back then, we were untouchable.  
back then, we believed the world would always be ours.

and yet, the memory that lingers most—  
not the games,  
not the darkness,  
not the rain-soaked streets,  
but **4:11 PM**,  
a quiet afternoon in my mother's room.

the apartment was small, the walls too close,  
but the golden light found me anyway,  
spilling through the gloom,  
brushing against my skin like a gentle **kiss**.

the clock ticked—soft, steady, **certain**.

i was **bored**.

utterly, beautifully bored.  
no rush, no weight, no worry.  
just a child suspended in time,  
wrapped in light,  
at **peace**.

*zehal*

Chaandni

When I grow up and have a daughter I'll name her Zehal  
after Saturn and adorn her little hands with rings and  
everything she could desire  
I'll fawn over her every move, her eyes, her nose, undying  
proof,  
That I was loved, and she is too.

When I grow up and have a daughter she'll be cursed  
with my demeanour and she'll always hate me when she  
looks in the mirror.  
She'll curse my love and her life, better not have one than  
fill it with strife,  
And I can't save her even if I want to.

I'm sorry, daughter, that I bring you pain.  
A mother's love once again left in vain.  
To start off, we thought we were beautiful  
It's a tragedy we no longer do.

My daughter! do not hate your face.  
Show your weary mother grace.  
Bury your hunger far away.  
Remember how to love and play.

Daughter, your jewels, they bring you pain.  
They won't teach you how to love again  
I'm sorry, daughter, I have failed  
You show not the pride by which you were named.

# where are the ones?

Adiba Khan

where are the ones who translate **the thoughts**,  
who make the sane go mad and the mad feel taught?  
who wake with the weight of the universe in their chest,  
yet find no solace in gods or rest?

where are the ones who speak in unsaid things,  
who carve their sorrow into gilded wings?  
who drink the stars in sleepless nights,  
whispering truths that flicker like lights?

this world hums in a language unknown,  
where beauty is numbers and hearts are stone.  
they worship the trends, the stocks, the screens,  
but who will worship the space between?

where are the ones who seek what is real,  
who peel back time just to see how it feels?  
who chase infinities with trembling hands,  
while others count coins and measure lands?

if they exist, let them hear this call,  
let echoes rise where shadows fall.  
for a voice unheard is a life untold,  
and silence is heavy when left to hold.

if no one speaks in the tongue i know,  
have i been **mute** all along—  
or simply **alone**?

# *breathe*

Tim Nguyen

We humans are so simple.  
We stare at the night sky,  
as if scattered pinpricks of light  
could hold all our dreams.  
We name the stars,  
as if giving them stories  
makes them ours to keep.

We watch fireworks,  
our hearts rising with the sparks—  
tiny bursts of paper and flame  
becoming something more.  
For a moment,  
the world is only colour and sound,  
only wonder.

We pick flowers,  
not to own them,  
but to hold their beauty  
for just a little longer.  
We place them in glass jars,  
like bottled joy,  
watching petals press against the light.

We make music  
out of anything—  
hands on a table,  
feet in a puddle,  
breath against glass.

Everything sings  
if you listen hard enough.

So when did it stop?  
When did the stars become just science,  
fireworks just noise,  
flowers just objects,  
and sound just silence?

Did it disappear?  
Or did we just forget to look up?

Maybe we forgot to press our ears against the world  
and listen for its song.  
Forgot where we left our wonder,  
blaming its absence for maturity,  
never thinking to search for it—  
tucked between schedules,  
hidden behind screens,  
lost in the rush of growing up.

But wonder waits.  
In a quiet streetlight glow,  
in the hush of waves against the shore,  
in the laughter that lingers a little too long.  
It waits for the moment  
we stop,  
breathe,  
and remember  
how simple it all was.

And how beautiful it still is.

*suzanne cory high school , 2025*