

Hope during the Pandemic

Featuring work by 29
contributors from all over
the world.



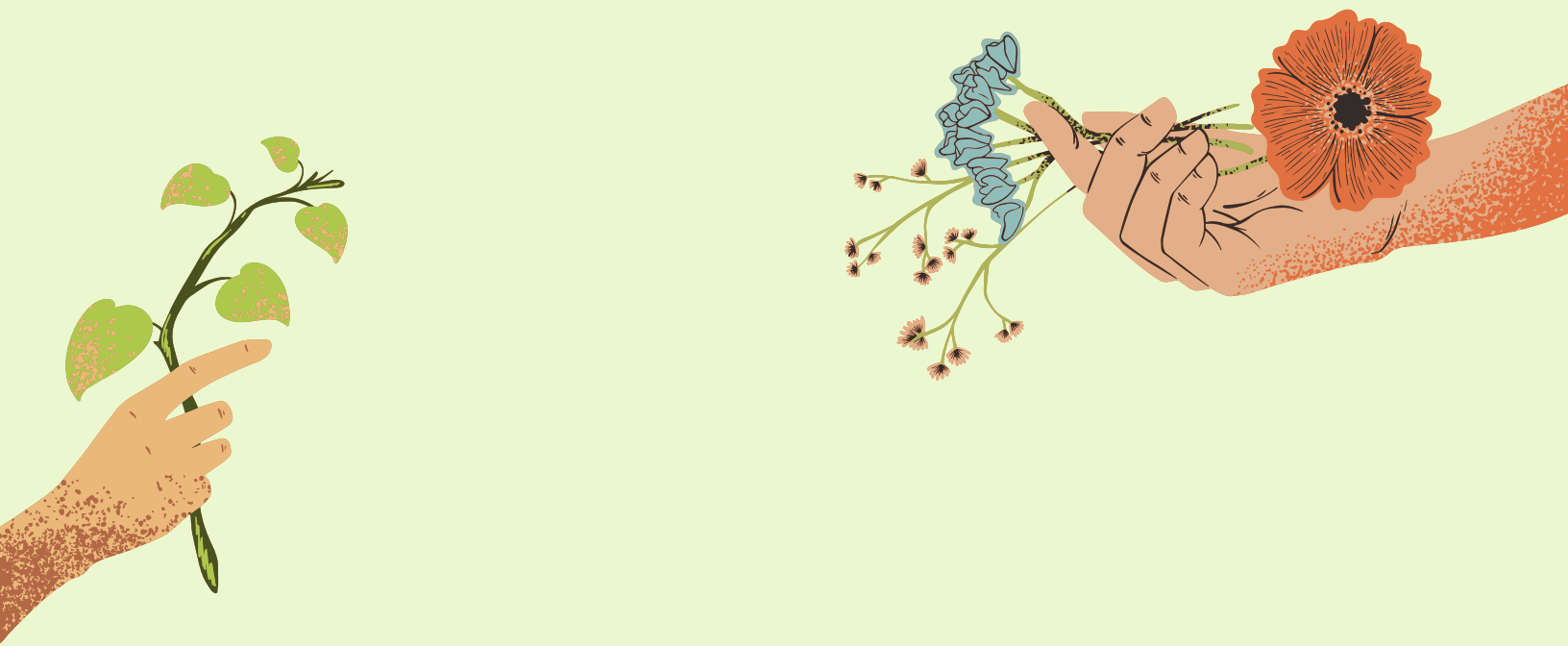
Editor's Note

First I would like to thank Aida Guo for creating this beautiful cover art. The piece is called "Quiet together" and the medium is digital. I would also like to thank Cara Ianuale for creating the mesmerizing back cover. Her piece is called "flowers for mom" and the medium is acrylic paint. Both of you are really talented artists and I'm so glad you decided to submit to the project!

Putting this project was a lot of hard work but in the end it was worth it! I hope that when you read and look through the art and writing in this project you are reminded of the beauty in this world and realize that all of this will be over soon.

One last thank you everyone who submitted to the project and trusted the magazine with your work! This project was made possible because of you!

Warm regards,
Jessica Wang
The founder of Ice Lolly Review



Contributors

Tanvi Nagar



Tanvi Nagar is a high school senior, aspiring to study psychology and economics in college. She has won several literary awards, edits for the Cathartic Youth Literary Magazine and Ice Lolly Review, and is the Head Girl of her school's student council. She believes kindness and compassion for all is the best way of life!



Simran Kaur



Simran Kaur is a surrealist still life and creative portrait photographer and artist currently based in London. She is Punjabi and she was born and raised in Italy. Simran's main objective is to make the viewer's dreams come true by creating intriguing setups, but she also creates mental health and environmental awareness with her experimental photography. At the same time, she also creates dreamlike abstract visuals to make the viewer explore another reality. Simran Kaur gets inspired by people's dreams and visions, but her childhood memories also inspire her to create various projects. To keep her childhood memories alive she started doodling digital and traditional illustrations which helps her to understand how she feels about those foggy memories of her childhood.





SaraJane Devereaux

SaraJane Devereaux is a writer from Las Vegas, Nevada. She loves evening walks and nostalgia. She is a Blog Writer for Ice Lolly Review.



Eleanor May Blackburn

Eleanor is a 23 year old actor and writer from Sheffield. She has been published in the recent anthology: Globalisation: The sphere keeps spinning by Making Magic Happen Press. She loves moomins, Yorkshire pudding and Blink182. Follow her on Instagram: [eleanormay_actor](#)/Twitter: [EleanorMayBlac1](#).



Eileen Fletcher

Eileen is a 13 year old girl who is passionate for art, sports, gardening, and reading. She takes piano classes and practices different forms of art in her free time. She loves nature and wildlife, and enjoys spending time with friends and family.





Cara Ianuale

Cara Ianuale is a seventeen-year-old girl. She is the founder and president of the non-profit organization the Purpleprint, which seeks to uplift female and non-binary artists."



Asawari Bhatia



Asawari a.k.a Ash is a 23 year old bi poet and writer from India. She has contributed to over eight poetry anthologies, including Train River Publishing. Recently, completed her post-graduation in Medical Microbiology, she is now on a journey to manifest all beautiful things she can be. You can always find her lost in her own company but is always ready to provide help. A cloud admirer who believes that one should always listen to their gut and to Universe.

Caroline Chou



Caroline Chou is a high schooler from Maryland. When she's not writing, you can find her playing golf, rewatching animated movies, or adding more books to her "To Be Read" list.



Niki Brennan



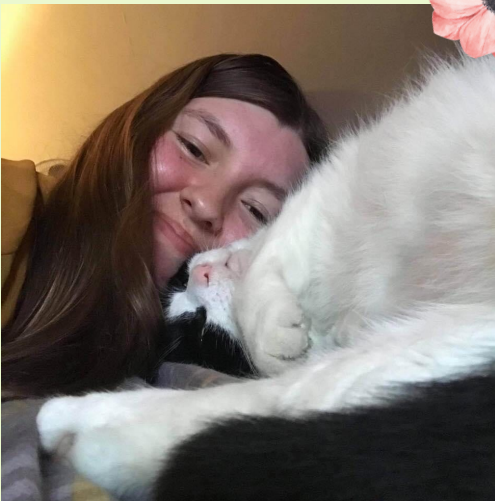
Niki Brennan is a writer and poet from Glasgow, Scotland. His recent publications are in or upcoming in Fahmidan Journal, Sledgehammer and the Kalopsia Lit Journal. He hopes everyone reading this has also managed to find hope in the pandemic.

Shreya Raj

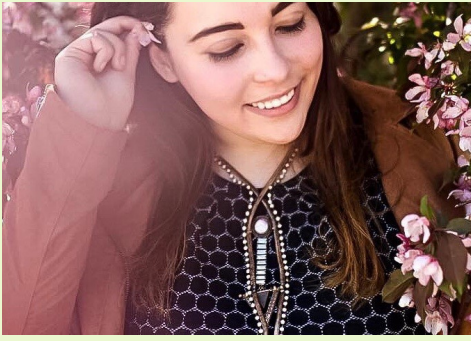


Shreya Raj is a 17 year old Indian poet and writer. She is deeply invested in all forms of art especially music and writing. She is also sensitive about mental health issues and hopes to provide people some comfort through her work. She loves BTS and hates mathematics.

Molly Bovett



Molly is a developing poet and novelist from rural Devon, England, currently splitting time between a medieval history degree and creative projects. Her poems are often themed around her queer identity, family, and the environment - and are often written with the help of excessive coffee and an endearingly lazy cat.



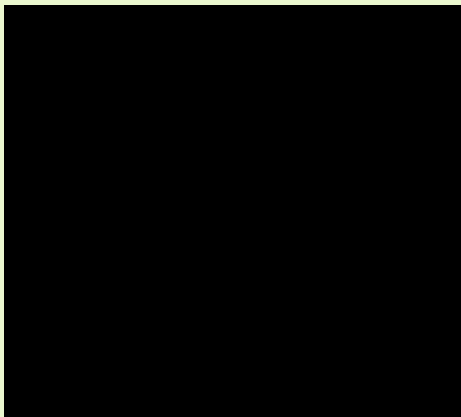
Kelli Lage

Kelli Lage lives in the Midwest countryside with her husband, Ryan, and their dog, Cedar. Lage is currently earning her degree in Secondary English Education. Lage states she is here to give readers words that resonate. Awards: Special Award for First-time Entrant, Lyrical Iowa



Samar Jain

Samar Jain, 15, is a student of class 10 at Delhi Public School, Gurgaon and is passionate about Public Speaking, Artificial Intelligence, playing sports and making impactful videos, He is also an avid reader and writer, and has contributed to numerous newspapers, journals and magazines. Furthermore, he is a Tech-enthusiast, and has won several accolades in Debates, MUN's and Group discussions. Importantly he is a fervent environmentalist and a Philanthropist, and considers himself to be a lifelong humanitarian.



Dentist Club

The Dentist Club is not a club. That is all.



Miceala Morano



Miceala Morano (she/her) is a high school senior from Arkansas. Her work is published in Footnotes, Project Said, and Paper Crane Journal, and has been previously recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. She was recently named the Arkansas Scholastic Press Association's Literary Magazine Writer of the Year.



Diya Padiyar



Diya Padiyar (she/her) is a 16 years old student from Goa, India with aspirations and dreams to share her words with the world. She likes to explore and acquire new skills. Her favorite feeling is productivity.



Yumna Ahmad



Yumna Ahmad is a 17 year old writer from Ontario, Canada. She is a staff writer for the Defiant Magazine and is currently working to become a novelist. Her work can also be found on Reedsy under the pen name "Kathryn Dino."





Gregory Brooks

Gregory is a psychology student at Utah Valley University. He loves learning about how writing can improve our mental health, and help individuals understand their own story. You can find more of his work at gregbrookspoetry.wordpress.com, or @bipolar_greg on Twitter.



Srishti Jha

Srishti Jha is a freelance writer from New Delhi, India. Her interests lie in writing about the poetry of things, people and nature. She also writes short/flash fiction and you can find all her writings on instagram at @srishti_and_poetry_



Cassidy Bull

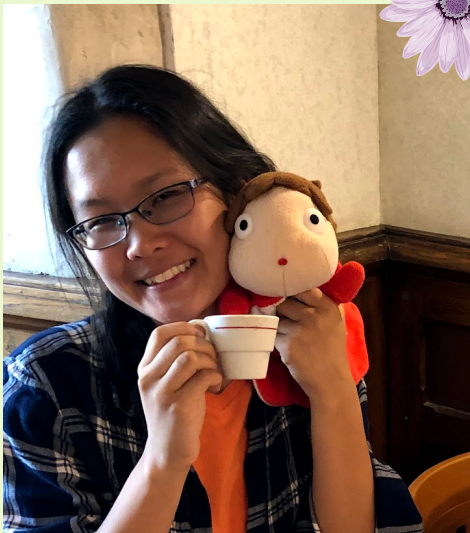
Cassidy Bull is a writer and poet from Tampa, Florida. In 2021, she graduated from Johns Hopkins University, where she studied Earth and Planetary Sciences and Political Science. She loves the intersection of science and art. Her first publication is an upcoming piece in Hobart Literary Journal.





Mariam Vaid

Mariam Vaid has always enjoyed reading and writing poetry, among the plethora of other hobbies she has. Her poems explore the hidden depths of powerful emotions like love, joy, and sorrow; that are more often than not, just looked at on surface level. Her collection of poems includes creative takes on topics like mental health, nature, and different aspects of society.



Aida Guo

Aida Guo is a rising senior at Green Level High School in North Carolina. She loves art, writing, and listening.



Maya Alinaizi

Maya is an Arab-Canadian high school student residing in the Middle East. She enjoys writing and creating art that explores heavy themes in various art forms and mediums.



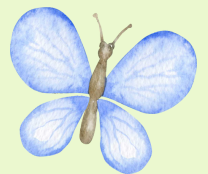
John Tuttle

John Tuttle is a young writer and creative. His writing has been featured by Tablet Magazine, The Millions, The Mantle, The Curator, and elsewhere. His photography has been published by Loomings, honey & lime, Blue Marble Review, The William and Mary Review, and others.



Naisha Mehta

Naisha Mehta is an art enthusiast who loves to draw, paint, sketch and explore different mediums. She also practices calligraphy during her free time.



Anukriti Yadav

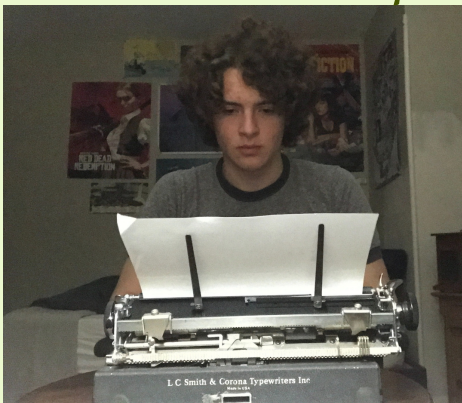


Anukriti (she/her) is a twenty-two year old undergraduate STEM student from Delhi NCR, India. A staunch feminist and proponent of mental health rights, she loves walking to stomp-and-holler music and photographing things around her. She can be found gorging on watermelons aplenty while admiring Gulmohars during the summer months. Her search for more art and poetry is always to bring out the joy of ordinary life. She can be reached on both Instagram and Twitter as @anukrav.



Brendan Liu

Brendan Liu is an avid video game hobbyist and collector with a growing passion for visual art, design and programming. They are an astral terrarium for lucid dreams, stories, and unbound creativity, waiting to be shared to give joy to the world.



Roman Taglieri

Roman is an 18 year old filmmaker/ writer from Long Island New York. Some things that they love are nature, New York City, the ocean, traveling, and getting to know people. Roman always loved storytelling and hopes that they'll be fortunate enough to make it their career someday.



Aleah Dye

Aleah Dye (she/her) primarily writes poetry—usually about morbidity, love, mental illness, and philosophy. She hopes to make hearts grow three sizes with her words. She is a 2020 Best of the Net nominee and the graphic designer for perhappened. Read her latest work via Pen and Anvil Press.

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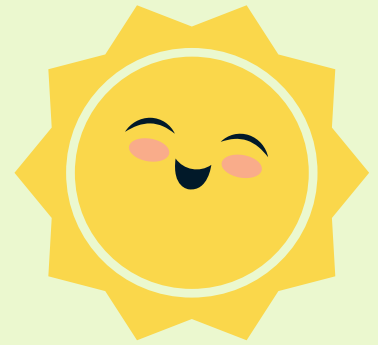
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When I lost my first tooth - Creative Nonfiction

By SaraJane Devereaux

My mother was already very experienced in the mothering department when I was adopted. She had birthed 4 children and adopted 2. She had a calling to adopt my two biological brothers and I. I was only the age of 6 months old when I moved in with them. I was adopted at the age of 4.

I don't remember anything from the pre-adoption stage. That might be a good thing. I know partially what happened, and I would not want to know how that felt at the moment. I will not go into that.

The day I lost my first tooth was a big one. I was running around, wild in my backyard, like a tiny animal. I was wearing that red tankini with the white polka dots. There are pictures in picture books around our home with me in that same swim suit. I was eating a strawberry popsicle. The same kind I still eat to this day. All of the sudden, my tooth was wiggling way more than it had the day before. I set my popsicle down, watching the fruit juice drip down the edge of the table, not that I would care. I was young! I put my tiny little fingers in my mouth and pulled on that tooth. Before I knew it, the tooth was in the grasp of my pointer finger and my thumb. I jumped up and down.

"Mommy!" I shouted. I ran around the yard until I found her. We had lots of friends over because it was a hot summer day and we loved friends. "I lost my tooth!" I told her, showing her my tooth that was in the palm of my small, 6-year-old hand. There was popsicle residue on my hand and dirt from being outside. I could see she saw past the mess I had made because, as I said before, she was already very

experienced in the mothering department.

She smiled and took me inside. We put it in a little baggy and went to my bedroom that I shared with my big sister. "Let's put it under your pillow for the tooth fairy," she told me. I smiled and got a little giggly. I had watched my older brothers and friends doing this for at least two years. I was so excited that I would get 4 quarters that would equal up to a single dollar. That night, I was beyond excited to go to bed.

Once I got into my bed and looked under my pillow, to see that the tooth was still untouched, I was so excited to wake up the next morning to the promised money from the little fairy that would enter from the crack in our door. I remember waking up before my sister had woken up. This wasn't rare, though. I've always been an early riser. I peeked under my pillow and saw that there were 4 quarters under my pillow, and my tooth was missing. I grabbed the 4 quarters and laid them out on my lap. I counted over and over, seeing that I, for sure, had all 4 quarters.

Once I had counted them about 15 times, I jumped out of bed and remembered that green piggy bank with the white daisies on it was in my closet. I opened the closet door, got the piggy bank out, and dropped the quarters in. I smiled to myself.

I lost all my baby teeth in one year. Whenever I would feel a slight wiggle in a tooth, I would go straight to wiggling it until it was loose enough that I could pull it out. Then I would repeat the process of showing my mom, putting it under my pillow, and getting giddy to wake up and find 4 quarters to put in my piggy bank. I bought a Polly Pocket with some of the money I had earned. We went to the store

and I found myself looking straight at the Polly Pocket with bright blue eyes and shoulder length brown hair, just like I had.

"I want that one," I said to my dad. I took her off the shelf. She looked just like me. I saw myself in doll form. We went to the register and I put the doll on the counter. I reached into my pocket to pull out a stash of quarters that I had brought.

"It will be \$7.41," the cashier told me. She looked down at me and smiled. This was the first time I was purchasing anything and I didn't know the first thing about using money. I asked my dad to help me count out what I needed to pay.

Once we got the right amount, I set the quarters on the counter and the cashier counted them while saying how many there were and then put them in the cash register. She handed me back the \$0.59 that she owed me and she gave me my Polly Pocket.

In just a year, I had made so many new discoveries. I had learned how it feels to lose a tooth, and I had learned how it feels to pay for something by yourself, and lots more unmentioned things. As I grow up, time gets shorter and days feel like milliseconds. I spend more time doing things that seemed exciting as a young child, but are no longer as exciting. Even though I'm getting older, I still experience new things almost any day; I'm pretty sure that's how it's going to be until the day I return to the clouds.

Inspiration: My love for my childhood, how much my parents helped me through the big and little things, and how we get to experience so much when we start growing up.



"Love for Guavas" by Anukriti Yadav

Medium: Digital art/illustration

Inspiration: I drew this illustration for my friend who shared his grandmother's experience during the lockdown in 2020 and the sense of separation and loneliness she was feeling as a result. My friend made sure to check up on her and talk to her at the end of each day. She would tell him stories: how busy her life used to be as a mother of seven, experiencing the Partition of India and Pakistan first-hand, and how their old house used to have a guava tree in the veranda. I wanted to show things that are close to her and bring her joy in reminiscing those parts of her life as a respite.

Heal - Poem

By Tanvi Nagar

Countless days, months and years- they say a winter that's lasted too long,
There is snow on the pathless land and the stars twinkle in the dawn,
The grasshoppers in the night, the birds in the morn, sing their song,
Whispers have melted into silence, a lot has changed, a lot gone.

Yamuna and Ganga reflect divinity and peace in their deepest depths,
Humans discover their long forgotten love, strength and resilience,
The Earth is removing its bandages, plastered on its wounds long ago,
The nebulous horizon is now dawning the shades of blue and indigo.

The morning sun touches the icy landscape and the petals of the rose bloom,
A unique camaraderie- between nature and mankind, removes all gloom.
Humans are behind the metal bars some animals spend their lifetime behind,
Maybe Almighty has paused the time, so humans can reflect on their lifetime.

It's calmer now, the tranquility after the storm,
Maybe coronavirus isn't the storm, but the actions of our past are.
Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian- it doesn't matter anymore,
Nor do all the jewels and riches we could fight another world war for.

Economies have halted like a train-the jolt hurts one and all,
Words of the wise echo, spiritual leaders beckon us to hear their calls,
Our suppressed zeal and passion full to the brim, overflow from our hearts,
For some dance and sing, some spill colours on sheets making exquisite art.

Nature alerts us that it's the time to take lessons, awaken, arise and act,
Take baby steps to learn the fragility of life, lead ourselves on the right track,

Question, reflect, think and rethink over the past, take measures to heal,
Make the melody of nature a part of our heart.
Search for our life's purpose-looking for the magic in Earth's farthest corners,
And finding strength, harmony and peace in uniting our futures.

This will heal you, heal me and heal many more bleeding hearts,
Make the icy winter snow melt- then you and me will no longer be far apart.
This will happen the day spring kisses winter goodbye, we would surely smile,
For we would have healed the earth and ourselves, made the most of this
lifetime.

Inspiration: I believe that it's important to look at the bright side of everything. In the pandemic, I realised the importance of always staying strong and encouraging others to be optimistic at all times.



"Precious Gamer Moments" by Brendan Liu

Medium: Photoshop

Inspiration: Finding hope during the pandemic... I found rekindled joy amongst the loneliness of isolation... connecting and playing with my friends no matter how far apart... sharing precious moments and strengthening our bonds no matter what happens.

Pressing Play - Creative Nonfiction

By Emily Morales

May 13, 2020:

I'm fourteen years old, sitting in my room, doing homework. My mom is watching TV and I can hear the news channel she's tuned in to from my bed. Headline after headline. *COVID-19 cases rise in the United States; Multiple schools across the country temporarily shut down; The country is on lockdown.* My friends start spamming my phone about how they're getting a two week break off of school, and there's a pit in my stomach. As the weeks went by and schools still didn't reopen, stories started to make their rounds on social media- Students describing how they feel cheated of their high school years, adults tearfully talking about how being out of a job has made things difficult, person after person repeating the phrase "It feels like my life is on pause." But, what if it was never on play to begin with?

My whole life I've struggled with social anxiety. When I was thirteen years old, I started homeschooling because going to class in person was too difficult for me. When the COVID lockdowns started, I remember wondering why nothing felt different. I spent day after day in the same cycle I had always been in. Everyone kept telling me all the things they had planned for when COVID restrictions were lifted and everything went back to normal, but this was my normal. I couldn't stop thinking, *What if someone asks me what I have planned when things are over? What am I gonna tell them?* For a long time, all I could feel was regret. I couldn't shake the sense that I had wasted what time I had to do things, and now I would never be able to. For a long time, the media was nothing more than a bleak image of death and devastation caused by the virus, and I felt

almost undeserving of the effect that image had on me. So many people had their lives ruined, but all I got were consequences for my years of being a ball of fear and awkwardness. For a long time, I felt like nothing would ever change.

Plague. It had always been an interest of mine. When I was younger, I spent a lot of time with my head buried in books. My home was chock-full of medical books courtesy of my mother's career in nursing, so it's no wonder why I tended to reach for the ones about diseases and bacterias. It's a couple months into the pandemic, now. I'm in my room as I often am, and I get a text from my best friend saying that he's just tested positive for COVID-19. Panic starts to rise in my chest. My thoughts are racing. I type out about a million variations of a single sentence before he cuts me off, and the message he proceeds to send leaves a sense of confusion in place of my worry. He asks me for advice. Eventually, I start to rack my mind for any knowledge I had on the subject of sickness, and my years of reading finally comes in handy. I send him message after message on how to deal with COVID, and in a couple weeks he tells me he's tested negative. Even though most of what I told him could've been found on the first page of Google, I felt like I had helped somewhat. Right after he had gotten better, he texted me again and told me that he wanted to hang out as soon as he could, and the pit in my stomach was replaced with a ball of glowing warmth.

When he asked me for advice, he helped me realize something that I had never been able to before: That there's a place for me. Even though I had always struggled in social situations and never really got a chance to work on those skills, I was still useful to someone. Furthermore, when he asked me to hang out when things were better, he gave me something new: Hope. I had something to look forward to for the first time in forever. Such a small moment inspired something within me. It inspired me to change.

I started setting goals around late 2020. I told myself I was going to do more things with less fear. I promised that I was never going to look for an excuse to get out of hanging out with someone again. When I initially got the text that he had tested positive, I couldn't shake the fear that he could very well die from COVID and I would never get to do all the things I wanted to do with him. However, instead of letting that fear consume me, I used it to help him the only way that I could, and the hope that I had that he would get better was what allowed me to do that. I realized that if I keep letting myself get held back by the things that scare me, I would miss out on so much. Instead of being terrified that my life would end before it even started during this pandemic, I decided to have hope that I would start living the life I always wanted when this is all over.

It is never too late to press play on your life. All you need is hope that you can overcome what's holding you back (*In my case, a therapist was helpful, but most people only need hope*).

Inspiration: I rarely see stories like mine of people who were socially awkward before the pandemic getting represented in media. It's usually stories of how the pandemic negatively affected extroverts, students, and people with jobs. Those stories deserve to be told, but I think stories like mine do, too.

Patience - Poem

By Caroline Chou

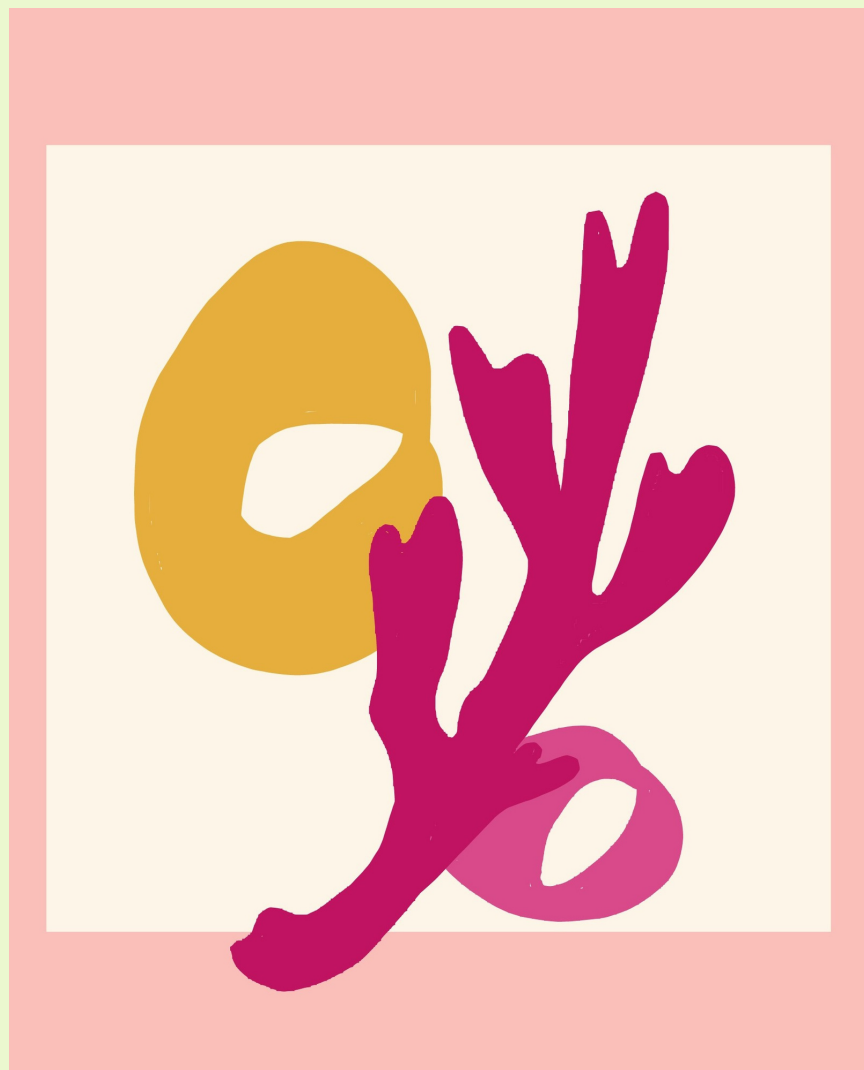
The rivers of time never cease their flowing
but it takes waves for carbon to be pressed
into pristine crystalline
diamonds.

Watch them glitter in the light
throw a million sparkles that
set the night aglow and you forget
about the darkness that consumed
you.

You're working on it
and when the time comes,

you'll shine.

Inspiration: During the pandemic, I found myself frequently in a negative mindset. I decided to write a new poem for every positive mantra that I found and wanted to remember. This poem was written to remind myself to be patient with myself and not to stress so much about feeling behind.



"Blushing Shores" by Cara Ianuale

Medium: Digital

Inspiration: The warm 8pm sunset I watched through the west shorehouse window inspired me—the brilliant rays of coral, fuschia, fire and butterscotch spilling over plants and stones by the dock, so bright but I couldn't look away.

My Room - Poem

By Shreya Raj

My Room

Its the same sight everyday,
my desk
my chair
my bed
my dreams.

The blank sheet flutters like that calendar in the corner
at this point I have zoned out on them both;
I'm suppose to be writing but words have betrayed me,
leaving me alone to fend off the monotonous beige of these walls,
soon enough I give up, its been this way lately, nothing thats gonna
change. I look out of my window
and watch the birds chirp as they pass by,
squirrels in my yard, enjoying their merry fights
nature seemingly amidst a rollicking dance of its own
leaving me wondering if it probably mocks my plight.
I turn away from the sun, from the freedom I long for
and am again faced with the same irksome sight
my desk
my chair
my bed
my dreams.

The days keep passing,
Zoom is too much for me now.
Is it trigonometry they teach?

I look at the screen but its a mirror in this moment
and my thoughts stare back at me.
Questions which always haunted my head,
laugh at the pathetic tears I shed
I run away from them, run from the numbness I feel,
And I am in my room again,
it holds me this time,
my desk
my chair
my bed
my dreams.

I write it all away,
broken words and imperfect poems
but my room doesn't mock me
my dreams don't scare me
the familiarity becoming a warm embrace
this room which has seen me go through it all,
grounding me to reality amidst my spiralling thoughts
and just like hope which stayed when everything else left
they stayed with me in my own Pandora's jar,
my desk
my chair
my bed
my dreams.

Inspiration: Being trapped in my room during the pandemic I started finding comfort in letting my imagination run wild but at one point these thoughts became too toxic. This piece is about finding comfort in our space, in the familiarity of the room when our thoughts everything else is unprecedented.

summers on dartmoor, 2001 - 2020 - Poem

By Molly Bovett

above the gorse, an owl alights
in the twilight, wings lipped in the firefly glow
of the sun sinking low, barely beating above
the skyline, the whole hillside dipped
in lantern-light.

evening brings out the blues in the world.
the river sings a low tune, the smooth stones
in the bridge send long shadows, the moon
a smoke signal, the lilac heather blooms. we
wait to hear the owl hoot

but there is no sound to be found in the dusk.
you rustle in your foldout chair, i press to the ground,
bugs thrumming all around as the owl
begins to spiral—our cameras cluck together
and trace the marvel.

but you can't crouch to the grass like once you could.

the last time we budding explorers set foot
through rock and mud, you were livelier,
healthier, if only by months; fewer creaks in your bones,
fewer cracks, fewer lumps,

but the chair suits you just fine. sitting slack, face tilted back to the sky,
browned by summer, lined with echoes. the song of age
is a long one, slow and profound, and we both hear it hum

all around in this quiet time. no notes required. so
many photos have led us here,

videos of me a (grand)child, slideshows of the garden and books
on wildlife and birdsong, homegrown herbs and beetle boxes.

and photos of the moor in twilight, with an owl lazing above
in flight. here, a rite for every summer, however you grow old,
however i stay young, however many songs are left to be sung;

even this lonely summer, and the numbered to come:
i'll carry you up here when your legs go numb.

Inspiration: As a kid, my granddad gave me his camera, and we roamed
the countryside together to photograph wildlife – especially in summertime.
But between his age and the pandemic, I feared losing this tradition. So
this poem is part love letter, part promise, that changing circumstances
won't stop our walks.



"Light of Hope" by Naisha Mehta

Medium: Oil pastels

Inspiration: Many people were suffering terribly during the pandemic, so I wanted to create this piece to give people light of hope.

Rainstorm - Poem

By Mariam Vaid

You were born to be a rainstorm
To hide the darkness with your light
To show your prescence with a boom of thunder
To send your voice throughout the night,

You were born to show beauty that was raw,
To wash the dirt from their eyes,
But the whole world ran for the hills,
When you opened up your skies,

So you forced your thunder to be silent,
And learnt to bite your rainy tongue,
They finally got what they thought they wanted,
You gave them life with endless sun,

As they saw their minds growing weak,
And their hearts becoming dry,
They wished they hadn't taken for granted,
Your rainy presence in the sky,

You were born to be a rainstorm,
To be strong and be bold,
To show the world that even after everything,
Your thunder and rain was still uncontrolled,

So when you think you're unimportant,
Know that life without you wouldn't be the same,
Because nothing in the world would grow

If it wasn't doused with rain.

Inspiration: Ever since I was little, I've always loved the rain because the dull and gloomy atmosphere it created gave me hope for a better tomorrow, that would be filled with sunshine and joy. So, I wrote this poem almost as an ode to the younger version of myself, whose optimistic mindset I try to embody still to this day.



"Home" by Roman Taglieri

Medium: Photography

Inspiration: Recently as more and more people get vaccinated me and my family have been able to see more of each other. I was inspired by this and took this picture of them and made it blurry to show the slow progression back to semi normalcy.

The Best We Can Do - Poem

By Gregory Brooks

I hold my father's letters,
in lieu of holding him—

*I can see how one might
get depressed out here,*

he wrote, before mentioning how
Bobby McFerrin's acapella hit

Don't Worry, Be Happy carried
him through the summer of '88.

Here's a little song I wrote...
You might want to sing it note for note...

Sometimes the best we can do
is hum along to an old melody,

remember a good day, or wait
for another one to come—

holding whatever we have
in the palm of our hand,

as if the power of love
could be measured

by the heartbeats we dedicate

to distance, to those we cannot see.

Inspiration: As a young man, my father was living far away from where he grew up. He wrote many letters about homesickness, and about hope, to his parents. Recently he let me start reading them, and it has been a meaningful experience to see how he worked through his loneliness.

in another life you squeezed me out to fill out the donuts - Poem

By Eleanor May Blackburn

The cobbled streets and dusty pavements lead the way to a distantly familiar home
With pebbledashed foundations and a knome on a swing
hanging from a crooked tree
Or was that a memory? A dream?
Let's call it both
I don't see the resemblance but I know it's there
Even in photographs it doesn't seem likely
But still-

We would be the best of friends
Or strangers nowhere in between
I smile at you outside class
In the park
Just behind the donut factory
Where you supplied the insides of those sugary treats
And taught yourself
Willpower
That you promptly unlearnt
You blink blankly
You don't understand me
Like so many of your lessons
That Granddad had no patience with you over

Why do you insist on following me?

But then a flicker
A thing vaguely resembling recognition flashes across
A connection
Existing only through a period of living inside another
Making your home there


I am now just a twinkle
we *would* be best friends
Or strangers
Nowhere
Else
It doesn't end
At the cutting of the squishy thread
 Unlike a hermit
 I wouldn't change my shell

Inspiration: My love for my mother which I think almost everyone can relate to. The special bond I feel with her.

Hopeful Quotes

"When we become alone, we find all the best parts of us. We find all the worst parts of us. What we fixate on is what consumes us. Then everything else falls away."

- **Yumna Ahmad**



"To all the ones out there, fighting for love, managing to just wake up everyday, still figuring out life, I see you, others too. They have been through it, you too will be. You are already doing great! There is hope, because there is YOU. And you are living."

- **Asawari Bhatia**

A watercolor illustration of several purple and pink flowers with green stems and leaves, located in the bottom left corner of the page.

The Roof of Hope - Poem

By Diya Padiyar

If the earth feels wry
And the land feels dry
I look up to the sky
The canvas
Of painted persistence
And hope
That has stood strong
Despite currents and fears
And thunders and tears

I look up to the sky
And the dark clouds reflect strength
And everything below
The roof of persistence
Reflects back hope

I look up to the sky
Because I know it
Will always roof my head
That is a turmoil of emotions

I know the sky
Will always roof my head
From the storms of my
Lonely apartment

I look up at the sky
And I know it will shine back at me

Sometimes,
It will paint a rainbow
Over my head
And blanket me
Like a mother tucks her child
To bed

I look up at the sky
And everything below
The roof of hope
Reflects back hope at me

The ginger in my cup of tea
Or turmeric in my hot milk
The candles on nights of a power cut
Notes by strangers
Or, by myself
To myself
The bloom in my garden
Flowers of marigold
A rose for a book mark
In my old dairy
An old cassette
Laughter of a child
An extra cookie for breakfast
The news of recovery
Of a dear one
Or even of a stranger

And a smile
Even if it's under a mask

A smile
That is not masked
That is true
Against all fears

Inspiration: In the pandemic, when my days started feeling hopeless, someone suggested me to look out for one hopeful thing everyday. That is when I learnt how helpful it is to invest in smaller hopes- A flower, an old notebook and specially the sky. This inspired me to write this poem.



"Island" by Dentist Club

Medium: Ink

Inspiration: riding a boat along the ocean of problems that life throws at you; when will we find an island for us to be able to finally rest our arms from rowing the boat?

Did you trace sunlight today? - Creative Nonfiction

By Srishti Jha

Light enters my three-room house from four places. Over the years I have memorized it. Long before the lockdown, I used to sit on weekends thinking about the days when the view from my balcony included the endless sky and not a wall with water seeping from it.

Although, the place I have come to call home has its own charm with all the activity always buzzing – for there is always *too much* happening when you live in the lower inner streets of a high end colony – the absence of green space, good amount of sunlight and the sky making it a place from where all of us were running away from rather than coming back to – either on weekends with friends or during vacations, always some place, else.

Then lockdown came. The home, the informal settlement I had been living in– for the first time it was taking its own form and entering into our lives as much as we – forcibly or voluntarily – had been long running from it. Below is the sketch I was drawing one day in the early hours and early days of lockdown, when we were still in the race and increasing productive, much unlike now, with energy draining each day.

The little brick house in front of us and on top of a tall building continued the escaping from the real life that was now magnified in the pandemic.



That's what we did, before too, we escaped from the cramped apartments to hill stations, to houses of all our families who were in better societies. Over time though I have realized that my longing for open skies and green spaces grew each time I got a bit closer to truly understanding the absence of it, its effect on me and the vibrant personality of a place like this that shows through all that tries to cover it.

There were questions other than how was your day? that needed to be asked but there was no one – or so it felt in that isolation. I wanted to ask someone

“Did you miss the sky today?”

“I haven't seen the full shade of sky at dusk since so long.”

“What was its colour yesterday? *Please*, tell me.”

In my balcony, I crane my neck like practicing a yoga asana and I am looking at the sky – sometimes long enough to start noticing the moving clouds.

As I move back inside because there is only so long you can keep looking up, that after a while I start my lockdown routine, one I made

just for myself and my sanity – during the work from home lunch break I lie down, find the angle that best gives me the view of the patterns the sunlight is making as it filter through from the curtains, light and airy as they are swaying in the warm breeze of afternoon's dull daytime hours. Over the lockdown months, here in Delhi, India, sometimes in the middle of meeting too, I would try catching the light before it goes across to the other room.

Absorbing and creating new, dark, melancholic thoughts on a daily basis throughout lockdown was starting to get too much when the play of light came like the first-time invitation to an art gallery, a feeling of new dawn slowly dropping on you like a light and soft *chunni* or *dupatta*. I was in as much awe of the filtered sunrays coming through as I was amused by it.

We have been planning to shift, however, even though mom has made a home out of the place we currently live in. In a way, that when she sits in the other room I can hear her and I can imagine her – watching TV, working in kitchen or even scrolling through phone – I can picture her easily. Just like when I was small and she had to go get something from the nearby market, she would be leaving me at home to take care of my dad. This was big, for a child. That was in my top ten things with dad which I remember and the list is not that long– which means the things that did get included in it were important to me even if they do not look like it.

As I traced the movement of the same shade of sun-yellow each day, sometimes I slipped into nostalgia and sometimes into a hope that I will get out, that the sun is close and so are the skies, if you look at something for long enough you feel you can reach it or you feel sleepy. If you feel sleepy, you can always close your eyes, drift into

dreams and meet them or it there. Either way, what I got out of my daily sunlight watching routine was a poem, so here it is, for you:

Did you trace the sunlight today?

In another room, it stayed.

At one place.

It waited, its own
bed&breakfast
served hot, sunrays
at the break
of dawn
day ahead, triggered
clinking of utensils
excitement of youngest
stories of the oldest

In the east corner
the bedroom which had its food, last
when all members of family retreated,
tracing their footprints to walls
of familiarity
the bedroom now pregnant
its belly would fill
with dreams of the day
hoping for the next, weekend

'maybe this time it will be different,
maybe this time, I come home
and won't wish to hang my heart

on the hook, or before
I take my coat
off my shoulders'

Inspiration: My only solace in my tiny apartment during my work from home and lockdown days were to look at the sunlight and open skies. Eventually, I started to trace the sunlight each day at 1 pm during lunch break and found it truly peacefull. With repeated lockdowns in India, this is a ritual, I have now adopted and I wanted to write about it.



"There is Light Despite the Darkness" by Eileen Fletcher

Medium: Acrylic paints

Inspiration: I made this painting to show others to look on the bright side during the pandemic and to practice hope and positivity. The girl is painting bright colours on a dark world, which shows she is using a positive mindset as we should during these times.

Settled - Poem

By Kelli Lage

Settled away from noise.
We breathe in the hums of nature.
The porch swing speaks
to the breeze.
The dirt, ready to bare greenery.
In the distance train-tracks rattle.
Gravel crushes and furrows
beneath his work boots.
The lark's song lifts us.
We lick the sunshine
and swallow the night.
Only room left for the day.
It soaks into our palms.
Tomorrow the garden will sing
and the hens will flap.
And after that we will retire to slumber.

Inspiration: Love is what gives me hope and love is what got me through the pandemic. This poem focuses on love.

I Need You To Hear This - Poem

By Miceala Morano

The mirror and I stand alike,
cracked and worn in corners
from all the times I've tossed my body
against the glass, finding defects
and wishing for defection,
begging for the universe
to take me back like a promise.
I watch as calloused hands trace scars
cross stars in ink-blue nights,
these bruises as plain as survival,
these bruises as proof of life.
The DMV clerk asks for a birth certificate.
I hand her my knuckles, my knees, my heart.
A woman at the doctor's office
clutches a purse rainbowed with pills
holds out shaking hands, begging for hope.
I trace the wisdom etched into her face,
the tree ring wrinkles, an eye gone milky-blue with time.
I soothsay survival despite it all.
The human body is a trophy, glowing golden
screaming to the sun, "See? We shine too."
We're still here. We're still here.
That's all I've ever wanted you to know.

Inspiration: I was inspired and motivated by the need to bring others hope, which has been a central inspiration for most of my work. I believe that writing is not only catharsis for the self, but a way to reach out to others when we can't be by their side.

What Is Written on the Palms - Creative Nonfiction

By Aleah Dye

Tan, commanding, calloused, and comforting, my father's hand grips my shoulder during a one-armed hug. I turn to my mother, and she reaches towards me, hands frail, dry, sensitive, but strong, reminding me why she draws everyone in like moths to a flame. Her hands alone tell you that she's spent a lifetime caring for people— not just her family, but everyone she meets. Her hands say she will care for you, too.

His hands are warm, and her hands are cold, and I wonder if that's why they're together, to restore a balance that neither of them noticed was missing until their fingers were twined together for the first time. They don't hold hands much anymore, and I wonder about that, too. Nowadays, their hands provide for each other, at work, at home, doing tasks the other cannot do... and I think to myself, *"That is love."*

They raised my brother and I to have gentle hands, ones that lift people up rather than push them down. To their credit, we are both givers, helpers of others, though our hands pushed each other around when we were kids. Now, our hands are states apart, and we can't even high five. That seems innocuous, but everything is meaningful when you start to forget what your own brother's hands look like. They're tan like our father's, but are they quite as dark? Did Alaska make them cold like our mother's? Pale like hers? I don't know. I don't know what my brother's hands look like, but I know that they've supported me.

My hands are child-sized, winter-dried, affectionate, touchy hands. I want to save people, so my hands beg to carry problems, despite their smallness. I find space between my fingers. There's always room for more.

When I press my palms against my boyfriend's cheeks, my hands tell him, "*You are loved.*" I lean in to his hand on my waist and know he is saying the same.

I smile to myself as I see the circle I've made. My family's hands are a cycle of affirmation, warmth, attachment, devotion. Each of us, of love. Our fingertips are shaking, pulsing, and love waits underneath.

Inspiration: I have always been fascinated by hands, both visually and artistically. I wanted to honor my family by showcasing our personalities through descriptions of our hands while also circling back to our commonality: love.



"Soft Place to Land" by Kelli Lage

Medium: Photography

Inspiration: The fascination of the bee in its element and observing how it interacts with flowers and plants around it.

Dear Memaw and Pawpaw - Poem

By Samar Jain

Dear Memaw and Pawpaw,

I know, the times have been an uncertain one,
with hospitals overrun,
and chance to hardly meet anyone,
I know, it was testing to not being able to tell those ages old stories to our
tiny loved ones,
and applaud the adored grandson for his very first homerun,
and give countless counsel to be a better person one-on-one,
I know, it was tough to not make those staid fine cinnamon buns and sate
family's appetite with megatons amid the wintery winter sun,
and celebrate the eve without get-togethers, carols and midnight fun,
I know, it's indeed been a year very different and difficult one,
However, let's try and be grateful for the existing love,
and thankful to the supreme above,
as no one ever injured their eyesight by looking on the bright side,
when you can't find sunshine, be the sunshine, it is said quite right,
With jabs arriving and dawn arising, its time to bid goodbye to the bad
and be reminiscent to always be kind,
and finally, its time to forget about what went behind.

Love,
Grandson,
Samar



Inspiration: I lost my beloved grandfather in the recent month, who had played a significant role in raising me up to the person I'm today. I am numb with grief in a period of national and personal mourning, and yet it pales when compared with the grief and suffering of those who have had to cremate their loved ones in streets or parking lots. Its quite evident that the elder a person becomes the only tougher it gets for them to handle a situation in a time of crisis, and its our responsibility, as the youth, to protect the most vulnerable sections of the society in times of need, and Ice Lolly Review, by launching the "Hope during the Pandemic" project, has enabled me to do exactly that. I as a person, who takes care of his grandmother, who is left alone to face the world after the demise of her consort, understands that its more important than ever before to spark a ray of hope in the lives of our elders. I wish that I'm able to deliver my raw emotions wherever this work of mine reaches, and to my grandmother too who is choking in desolation right now, just like many others would be in the nursing home in Long Island. I heartily hope that my piece finds a place in this magazine, which will be a way of mine to contribute back to the society.



"A Spot of Yellow" by Kelli Lage

Medium: Photography

Inspiration: The contrast of colors I observed and what the moth brought to the flowers around it.

Meals with You - Poem

By Cassidy Bull

You're the only one who understands
what I mean when I say I want the sunrise for breakfast.
To have red and gold flow
over my tongue and out my fingertips,
so I can touch the world with light.

Holding the glow in my mug,
with clouds for creamer
and a light breeze for sweetness.
Warmed up by the rays raining in
through the kitchen skylight.

You're the only one who understands
what I mean when I say I want to taste the mountains for lunch.
To crunch snow under my shoes at the summit
with flurries melting on my tongue,
so I can keep the weather close to me.

Ascending into the clouds
at noon on a Tuesday,
hungry for sustenance that isn't a sandwich.
Chilled skin from crisp currents—
gales of glorious alpine altitudes.

You're the only one who understands
what I mean when I say I want saltwater for dinner.
To glide over and under waves
while I breathe in corals and sharks and eels,

so I can savor another world.

Diving deep towards kelp forests
and future sushi seaweed.
Down until we reach perpetual night
interrupted only by flashing squid lights
and swimming slithering shadows.

You're the only one who understands
what I mean when I say I want the stars for dessert.
To soak up trails as they shoot across sky.
Lifting off into night becoming celestial,
so I can twinkle alongside Sirius and Vega.

Soaring in circled patterns,
flying across the firmament as fires of the gods,
adjoining Andromeda on her nightly journey.
Ice cream constellations sprinkled with splendor
and topped with fluorescent fudge.

You're the only one who understands me.

Inspiration: Originally inspired by Dickinson's Bring Me The Sunset In A Cup, it evolved to be inspired by my grandparents' love and the way they understand their partners. Grandma and Grandpa (Free), Papa and Nana (Bull), and Grandma and Grandpa (Osborne), love you all.



"When the Sky Caught Fire" by John Tuttle

Medium: Digital Photography

Inspiration: I loved the mix of the colors my family and I got to see on the beach in the early morn, when the sky was filled with hues of orange, crimson, and rose and all of them reflecting in the blue and foamy white of the sea below.

Lockdown in Italy - Fiction

By Niki Brennan

Now that she has become used to festering in the house all day, Letty has started to enjoy lockdown. It didn't take long. Now, she barely even thinks about it. She reads about the virus on Twitter, exchanges the customary exclamations with her friends through text - 'WTF,' so scary,' 'lol can't believe this is all happening because someone ate a bat' etc. then she forgets about it. It doesn't really affect her.

Her parents and grandparents live out in the country far from the centre of Modena. Her friends have either moved back home or have been self-isolating for a while. Her flatmate barely even leaves her room anymore. Everything else is just something she tries not to think about.

She actually thinks it's all quite exciting and looks forward to telling future generations about how she survived a pandemic. She will tell them about the terrible danger she was in from the killer virus, the feeling of it being like prison, the police and military on the streets, rationing food and going hungry, the gradual insanity of becoming used to, and even fond of, being alone. That was our generation's war, you know. This is what she will tell them.

Usually, she wakes up around noon, scrolls on her phone for an hour then gets out of bed. She makes breakfast and leaves the dishes in the sink until her flatmate cleans them or until there's no clean pans or plates or cutlery. She showers then heads out onto the balcony. She applies factor 4 tanning oil which smells of coconut. She posts a picture on Facebook, captioning it 'could get used to this life.' She

isn't satisfied with the amount of likes it gets within the first half hour so she deletes it, but keeps the picture saved for a better time. Usually around 6pm is best.

She likes listening to the people living on the balconies around her. There is the old couple - Marco and Beatrice - who drink cartons of sangria and play dominos - Beatrice usually wins, and Letty suspects Marco lets her. Sometimes Beatrice throws the empty cartons over the balcony with a cackle and Letty sees it drop past. There is the man who has begun playing his guitar apparently for the first time in years. He phones someone named Giulia every night and they argue and when they hang up he cries and picks up his guitar and plucks through some chords. Badly. There is the couple with the two annoying kids who scream for their father until he gives them attention. Once the little bastards are locked away in bed the couple argue in hushed tones about the wife's affair. Sometimes she slurs her words and abuses him for being boring and being a bad lover and being a bad father and for his terrible cooking. His speciality risotto is not all that special.

Letty waits for the singing to start. This is usually when her flatmate scuttles out of her room, hissing at the retreating sun. It all started with some drunk guys somewhere down the street singing *Bella Ciao* then the whole street joined in. The next night it was *Come Together* by The Beatles, the guy upstairs even tried to play a few chords along with it, but they were wrong and out of time. He must have gotten embarrassed because he stopped playing and didn't continue singing along. Then it was *Ti Amo*, she hates it, but she could hear the old couple crying and imagined them holding each other and watching the day slide away down the other side of the world and it made her a little sad. It has become the highlight of her day, the music the only

variable in a monotony of social media and awful television.

This is how her days go. On and on, as days do. But Letty knows, as her grandma always told her: *it can only get better*.

Inspiration: I Wrote "Lockdown in Italy" as part of my Lockdown Scrapbook: a project I did for my Master's degree, which included various narratives from all over the world.



"Surprised by the Mantid" by John Tuttle

Medium: Digital Photography

Inspiration: My cousin wanted me to snap some shots of her in commemoration for her high school graduation. In the field we went to for the photos, my cousin came upon a praying mantis which she proceeded to pick up. But she seems to have had second thoughts!

After the Pandemic - Poem

By Maya Alinaizi

Going out, movie theaters, restaurants, shows, malls.
School, job, work, crowded halls.
Friends, meeting up, hanging out.
Walking, sprinting, running, out and about.
Dressing up, decorating faces, getting all dolled up.
Going out, going places, never returning home.
Warm embraces, lingering for more than expected.
New people, new faces, all connected,
Licking envelopes, and kissing people on the cheek.
Hugging, face in hair, hands on elbows, knees all weak.
Conversations clearly heard, not muffled by the sound of masks.
Observing ordinary people, carrying out their daily tasks.
Shaking strangers' hands, clicking elevator buttons with bare hands.
Crowded airplanes, new countries, no more travel bans.
Busy gyms filled with industrious people.
3pm, streets filled with businessmen,
business women, and businesspeople.
3am, listening to the yells of your annoying neighbors
that wear American Eagle.
Frivolous parties, unnecessary social gatherings, celebrating anything and
everything.
Weddings, white dresses, a weeping mother, a silver ring.
Holding hands, giggles, and overcrowded classes.
No more fogged up glasses.
No more swollen back of ears and no more mask acne.
No more sweaty upper lips, gladly.
No more guessing what co-workers look like.

No more squinting eyes to fake smiles.
No more Zoom, and more zooming to class.
More vitamin D, more exercise.
More faces.
Bare, beautiful, maskless faces.
Not smiling, they never smile, but it is good to see them.
The rare, occasional smile you think about for hours, forget about in days.
Different faces, not just eyes and brows.
Not just hair being the only marker of recognition.
Now it's mouths, noses, smiles.
Teeth, tongues, chins.
All visible.
A healing world, a coping world, a resuming world.
Slowly, slowly, going back to normal.

Inspiration: I wrote this piece for my little sister, to remind her of life before the pandemic, and what it will look like, hopefully, after (and also to teach her some new words). I think we all need to be reminded of how it was, how it will be. Even though this is a bit of a silly poem, everyone who reads it tells me they feel a tiny bit of relief, and I desperately want for the people around me to just let go of a little tension.



"Fuwa Orb" by Simran Kaur

Medium: Digital illustration

Inspiration: In my childhood, I used to draw a lot. Most of the drawings looked like doodles of strange creatures which I used to imagine. As I grew up, I stopped doodling because my teachers would say that doodling is not a form of art. I tried my best to draw perfectly without any mistakes, but it wasn't fun I didn't like it, I hated not making mistakes. I then stopped drawing and only from last year, during quarantine, I got back to it and this year I discovered again the joy of doodling and how it made me remember of my childhood memories. Whenever I doodle It feels like I'm marking my childhood memories which make me feel at home, this makes me feel hopeful that I will not lose my childhood memories. As I was doodling, I came up with these creatures called Fuwa Orb are soft eyeballs with angelic features and bird legs. I then decided to draw these characters adventures by mixing cute and dark aesthetics.

Birdsong - Poem

By Cassidy Bull

At least once a day
my mom goes outside
and whistles to the birds
who live in our backyard.

The same tune always,
but it never seems to get old.
The birds always whistle back
to her.

Magnificent massive melodies
from such small bodies
fluttering among the branches,
almost always the oak.

I wonder if the warbler knows
that the song that travels to him
through the air
is not from one of his own.

The sound waves that find him
are actually from foreign lungs.
A hum at a different frequency.
Song of another species.

Do birds appreciate our voices the
way we marvel at their harmonies?

Unable to understand,
but relish regularly.

Unsure forever of meaning,
yet meaning need not be
absolute.
The carol could connote anything.

Perhaps exact translation is irrelevant.
And what matters is the essence—
the effect the lyric lays
on you.

You can feel meaning
without grasping exact meaning.
We still savor the lullaby
if sung in another language.

The poem tapped out by the woodpecker
could mean a multitude of things or nothing.
To me, the patterned knocking is
comforting, and that is purpose enough.

Familiarity flaps through the air
in falsetto,
fashioning a path for me to follow
home.

Often I am not home though, but still
the soft steady chirp of
the chickadee flies to greet me

in the warm morning breeze.

The same tune always
(it really never gets old)
finds both my mom and me
despite separation by geography.

Even with an empty nest,
my mom is not alone.
The birds and I will always whistle back
to her.

Inspiration: My mom inspired me to create this. She loves the songbirds and whistling back and forth with them. Even if I'm not at home, every time I hear birds I think of her.



Back cover by Cara Ianuale