



...because nothing lasts forever





"In the hush of dawn, where shadows play,
Fleeting whispers dance on the edge of day.
A soft breeze carries secrets, light as air,
Moments like dewdrops—fragile, rare.
The laughter of children, a song on the wind,
A glance shared between strangers, where stories
begin.

Like petals unfolding, only to fall,
Life's sweetest treasures are often the small.
Time, a river flowing, swift and unbound,
Leaves traces of joy where memories are found.
So hold close the laughter, the warmth of a smile,
For these ephemeral gifts make the journey
worthwhile.

In the blink of an eye, they shimmer and fade,
Yet linger in hearts, in the choices we've made.
Embrace the fleeting, let go of the past,
For the beauty of now is what makes moments
last."





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the end of year issue



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Thank you to all the contributors!
This issue would not be possible
Without you



A letter to you: The reader By Tega Joannes

Welcome to the second edition of our magazine, where we dive into the beautiful and bittersweet theme of ephemeral. In a world that often feels rushed and overwhelming, it's easy to overlook the fleeting moments that shape our lives. because, it is within transient experiences that we often find the most profound beauty. Each page you turn in this issue is a celebration of the delicate nature of existence—those brief yet powerful moments that leave lasting impressions on our hearts. From the laughter shared with a friend to the quiet stillness of a sunset, these ephemeral instances remind us to pause, reflect, and cherish what is here now, even if just for a moment.

In the stories, poems, and artworks featured here, you will encounter the fragility of memory, the fleeting nature of love, and the impermanence of time. Each piece invites you to explore the layers of meaning hidden within the transient, urging us to appreciate the beauty found in letting go.

Sincerely, Tega. (Founder of Studio Moone)

"Bouquet" By Amira Dayana

When I think about you, I think about the bouquet of dried flowers on my desk, withered and morose in a dusty vase.

They'd been tied with string for a fortnight til the fateful night you'd called. When you said goodbye I'd forgotten all about it, twined upside down in the back of my closet.

Eventually when I found it, I thought of the gardens of babylon. I compared it to us, thought to be mythical, only real when evidence is spoken aloud (and there never was any).

Except maybe this, these paper thin petals casting shadows on the wall. A death of something is proof it lived. Colours faded are a sign it had any at all. And a change once love leaves, is a love missed.

Goddess of
the Brook
short story
By Katherine Zhao



The glint of her gold hoop earrings casts a defiant diamond against the sky, beads of sweat from the overhead sun tracing the fault lines around her eyes. Fingernails glazed with a rushed layer of alizarin crimson, Ms. Rivera jams a small brass key into a rusted doorknob hidden in a back alley, uttering a few benign curses when it doesn't budge with her first few attempts.

It's 6:30 on a muggy July morning — most folks in the town haven't yet risen. But Ms. Rivera, they say, has the discipline of a stubborn rock that clings to the edge of a waterfall. She runs a snack shop on the street corner, just two blocks down from the movie theater and right across from the auto repair shop. It's called "Rosita's Delights," and its name is written in cerulean cursive on a curb sign out front. A tapering "HELP WANTED" poster clings to the window front, right next to a selection of candied apples, beignets, and her famous Slurpee machine.

Ms. Rivera walks across the chipping wooden tiles of her shop, her black hair slicked into a young girl's swinging braid, a few stray locks framing the sun-baked skin of her face. A silver-gilt cross necklace hangs over her collarbone, burning hot against her cool, spotted skin. The store's pathways are lined with selections of dried fruits, gummies, chocolate bars and bubble gum: baskets of offerings topped off with white laminated signs that have prices written in fading Expo marker.

None of the adults in the town ever came here, just the kids with their pocket dimes and crumpled dollar bills. When a soot-faced kid in a tattered soccer jersey comes in clasping shiny pennies in his sweaty hands and forks over his treasure in exchange for a lollipop, Ms. Rivera never counts the money and just clinks the coins into the cash register.

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"Her name means 'brook' or 'shore," said Mr. Whitman, who led an archaeological excavation in the Peruvian Andes twenty-something years ago. "It's Spanish and Italian in origin."

Ms. Rivera was never much of a conversationalist: the dried streams of her lips occasionally cracked into a delta of a thin smile, revealing the tar-stained teeth of a smoker. The women of the town speculated that she was mute — by choice or by nature, they couldn't decide.

"She may have the vocal timbre of a late-blooming baritone," Lesley huffed.

"Something very traumatic must've happened to her during her formative years," Emily quipped. "She's never wanted to speak of it since."

"She probably has a tongue piercing or something decadent in her mouth," Gertrude said, wrinkling her pinkish nose.

"Maybe she's still learning our language," Betty concluded, folding her hands as if in prayer.

The women would then all nod and go back to stirring their Sunday afternoon tea, never to speak of the enigmatic red-skinned woman again until the next lapse of silence in their conversation. What they didn't know, however, was that Ms. Rivera had sat down with one of their sons after he'd wandered into her store, crying after a lost T-ball game. They also didn't know that Ms. Rivera had given him the words of affirmation he was missing in a perfect Midwestern accent — albeit with a few fell swoops of her consonants and subtle trills in her r's. She'd also clasped his wrists and pressed pieces of chewy caramels into his shaking palms.

As these boys grew older, they began to see Ms. Rivera differently — no longer did they simply see her bird-like face

peeking over the counter above jars of raisin cookies, as most of them climbed dramatically in inches from the ages of twelve to sixteen. First, they began to see her swollen breasts through her flannel shirts. Then, they began to notice how her jeans were etched with Sharpie zigzags winding between checkered boxes. They also noticed how the designs became distorted when stretched around her supple hips.

It was almost Freudian how these boys continued to stop by her store, this time with tips from their summer jobs and allowances from good report cards. They'd grin with teeth fresh out of braces against a summer tan when they realized she still remembered their boyhood nicknames.

When these boys became men, they moved out of their parents' houses, marrying high school sweethearts and girls-next-door. While their wives would buy fresh produce from the supermarkets in the next town over, they would take their sons to Rosita's Delights, teaching them to stuff lollipops and peppermints in their overalls so their mothers wouldn't find out about their rendez-vouses with boyhood.

Thus began the rumors that Ms. Rivera, was, in fact, a Brazilian showgirl before coming to town who got involved with the wrong men and fled by the hair of her feathered crown. The kinder folks tended to believe that she was a South American beauty queen who gave up her crown for a quiet life of modesty, while others believed she'd deserted her family of three children after her husband lost his job at a local factory.

But none of this was true in the slightest: Ms. Rivera was never a beauty queen, nor an absent stowaway.

Ms. Rivera had, in fact, a remarkably normal upbringing.

She grew up on the fringes of the middle-class in a small suburban flat. Her mother was a waitress at the local diner and her father wore a tie and worked an ordinary office job.

When she was just nine years old, they both died in a car accident. Her aunt, who lived in the next state over, turned up her nose in disgust when Ms. Rivera showed up at her door clutching a suitcase and a stuffed animal. She sent her off to boarding school, where Ms. Rivera would stay until her eighteenth birthday. Upon Ms. Rivera's homecoming, her aunt had been diagnosed with leukemia and lay in a hospital bed until her dying breath.

Ms. Rivera then took her aunt's rusted Buick and a satchel of her schoolbooks and began to drive with no end in sight, her skinny fingers clenching the wheel like a vise. When she ran out of gas, she docked her steed on the roadside.

Standing across from her was a cracking white building façade with discarded mannequins out back — probably a seamstress' former storefront. On its door was nailed a "FOR SALE" flier and a phone number. Ms. Rivera found the nearest pay phone and bought the property with the cash her aunt had stowed away in the Buick's glove compartment between cigarette butts and pharmacy receipts.

Thus began the story of Ms. Rivera, the unsung queen of summer's passably nostalgic delights and Sharpie drawings on faded jeans.

With the passing of many seasons, Ms. Rivera eventually grew streaks of white hair that she could not hide beneath knotted headbands and loose braids. Her breasts began to sag, and the crow's feet next to her eyes deepened, their lines expanding like cracks on a sidewalk.

Regulars at Rosita's Delights started to realize how tasteless

her cherry rock candy was, how doughy her beignets were, and how harshly packs of peppermints prickled their tongues. Pink lemon Slurpees began to feel lukewarm in their hands, the July sun's rays soaking their contents through flimsy paper cups.

Summer became fall, and fall yielded to the bare trees of winter. If you listened closely at night, you could hear the babbling brook in the forest behind the town wailing.

Ms. Rivera's name left the tongues of the neighborhood women during teatime. Much to the delight of the female schoolchildren, the boys began to take them to the movie theater after school instead of stopping by Rosita's Delights.

When Ms. Rivera's time came, she died in the church and was found by Father McClenney. Her face was buried in a woolen sweater as she curled up on the second pew from the altar. Her fingers were clasped around wooden beads and dried rivers climbed from the bloodshot corners of her eyes. Her face was serene like a sculpture molded of reddened clay.

She was buried behind the church the very next day. Father McClenney smoothed the creases of the single-page eulogy he had penned the night before with gloves caked in dirt. But there was no point — no one had come to the service.

As he approached the end of his speech, Father McClenney realized just how stupid he looked, talking to nothing and no one in the sparse graveyard behind the deserted church. His voice trailed off as he uttered a final few words of a sentence he realized meant nothing at all. He set the wasted eulogy atop Ms. Rivera's grave, and felt a lump rising in his throat. His lips began to quiver, and he nervously adjusted his spectacles.

Suddenly, tears began to pour forth from Father

McClenney's eyes. The taste of dried, sickly-sweet caramel lingered on his saliva, the scent of fresh-swept floors forever ingrained in his nostrils. He hastily wiped his gloves on his pants, fingers grazing the outline of Ms. Rivera's beads, which he had stuffed in his pocket before placing her in her casket. He ran back into the church with his arthritis-stricken legs, black dress shoes clacking against the mosaic floors.

As he locked himself into the confessional box, he began to hear the noon bells toll.

"Goodbye" and "Lost Dreams" By Katherine Zhao



"Goodbye"

"Goodbye" and "Lost Dreams" By Katherine Zhao



"Lost Dreams"

"Goodbye" and "Lost Dreams" reflect upon the ephemerality and fleeting nature of childhood innocence --- the former through a self-portrait and the latter through a childhood stuffed animal.

"August's poem" By El

Said to slip away
Gone but never to fray
Promised to always stay
Then didn't give you a say

I aspire to be like change Flowing past beyond my range Never wanting exchange Always wanting to arrange

Imagine shapeshifting
Constantly uplifting
Mutating to the point where you yourself do not recognize who you are.

The World

According to the

Gray Tabby Cat

short story
By Katherine Zhao

In the world according to the Gray Tabby Cat, nothing and everything always stayed. They say cats have nine lives, but he was sure he'd already lived through eighteen...and yet, he remained breathing, his fur the same striped conglomerate and his eyes the same dull, flaxen yellow.

It was a sticky summer day in the arid town, with the Gray Tabby Cat traveling through the back alleys between the white adobes of Greece. The Arabs always came back around this time of year, with pots and ladles of trinkets and spices to trade on the backs of their camels. They always stopped to either pet the Gray Tabby Cat's scruffy neck or offer him food.

But after a few years, the milk seemed to taste more sour, and the fruit became dry and flavorless. The merchants had stopped gifting him the fresh red meat left over from the business of the day and had started degrading him to crusts of gray bread and the shells of sunflower seeds.

One day, a handsome merchant dressed in colorful silks walking alongside a wagon loaded with beautiful tapestries walked through the main street.

This man came by once every four years. Each year, he had a new animal to exhibit. This year, it was a pretty canary.

The canary could sing wonderfully, but it could not fly. The merchant had cut its wings so it could never escape the bidder who wished to hear its music.

The canary's song entranced all passers-by, and the Gray Tabby Cat, too, fell under the bird's spell.

As the Gray Tabby Cat gazed up at the beautiful bird's gilded cage in the reverent afternoon sun, his mouth watered in desire.

He wished to possess the very essence of the songbird, to overpower the divine being.

When the merchant went to a nearby fountain to quench his thirst, the Gray Tabby Cat seized his opportunity. He leapt onto the wagon, clutching the bird's cage in his teeth. Fast as a demon, he darted into an alleyway and set the trembling bird down.

"I'm going to eat you now," he pronounced, baring his teeth. He tore the door of the cage open, pawing for the cornered, flightless bird.

In its last moments of life, the quivering canary began to sing a mournful melody.

It sang of bitterness over sights seen but never understood; it sang of a life of unfairness and lies; it sang of loneliness and melancholy. The Gray Tabby Cat hesitated as the bird's song trilled through his spine. He began to recall memories that had slipped through the crevices of his consciousness.

First, he recalled his mother – a beautiful calico cat whose soft, wet nose always tinged with the smell of almond milk. She bathed him often, her silken tongue smoothing his pelt as they sat upon the windowsill beneath the dappled afternoon sunlight.

He was one of several kittens in her litter. They had lived with a kind Arab family that catered to all their needs, granting them a life of comfort and luxury in a big house with tall chambers and a grand courtyard for his family to roam.

His name had not been the Gray Tabby Cat back then – it had been something in Arabic, in a dialect he had long forgotten.

He recalled the fire.

The smell of burning flesh and smoldering wood. His brothers and sisters scorched in their attempts to escape the cruel flames.

All he had ever known vanished before his flaxen eyes, turning into molten metal and charred rubble. The Gray Tabby Cat looked to his mother.

"Run," she whispered, a forlorn look in her golden eyes.

And he ran. Like the coward he was, the Gray Tabby Cat ran. Out of the fire, out of the palace, out of the town. Out of Arabia, until he reached the sea. By then, he had grown larger and had long since forgotten his name. His mother became nothing more than an apparition of the past, his siblings faces of faded seasons.

He was left with only a vague, almond milk tang to remember them by.

The Gray Tabby Cat shook himself, clearing his head, grounding himself in the present. He had abandoned that life long ago. The bird was nothing more than a cruel siren who needed silencing, and he needed to finish what he had started.

He forced the bird into his mouth and swallowed it whole. His throat felt as dry as the desert after he pushed the canary down his gullet.

Reflexively gagging, he hunched over, stumbling back onto the street. He began to wheeze as tears started to fall from his flaxen yellow eyes. His chest began to pound, his lungs collapsing amidst his panic.

The Gray Tabby Cat had seen a glimmer of truth, but now that light had been extinguished forever. A weight dropped into his stomach, and the reality of what he had done descended upon him.

"I'm sorry!" wailed the Gray Tabby Cat. The fat cat turned and lay flat on the ground like a cockroach flipped upon its back, basking in the unforgiving midday sun.

He clawed upon his exposed white belly, trying to get the

pretty yellow bird back out. His nails weaved in between the coarse furs of his underbelly, eventually breaking into his sensitive skin, lacerating his abdomen and staining his beautiful pure fur red, the only part of him not muddled in a sea of gray and brown.

Blood gushed out onto the steaming pavement, and the cat began pawing at his intestines, finding his rib cage and prodding his burning innards, trying to feel the feathers of the little yellow bird.

As the world began to blur, the Gray Tabby Cat relived each of his eighteen lives. He knew death would find him this time, as elusive as he had been at cheating it.

The blood dried on the concrete as the sun's rays shined mercilessly, preserving the macabre corpse of the Gray Tabby Cat.

"Adriatic" By Katherine Zhao



Adriatic",

"Adriatic" portrays the random yet tranquil nature of nature's most volatile element: water --- specifically, the Adriatic Sea's waves.

"Just a little word bout the damned" By M.S Blues

the damned stands before her 'āina, repressed tears embellish her limpid eyes as she overlooks the lavender, melancholy skies, acknowledging those before her with a silent prayer and nod.

winds swim around her, the trees serve as companions, and the distant chants of spirits grow closer to her despondent heart as seconds speed by.

she sits on the sand, watching the intricate waves clash against the rocks –

(i remember clashing like that with... "embrace the little things, my girl,")

a tear skips down her cheek and she's hasty to wipe it away, as if someone's there to judge.

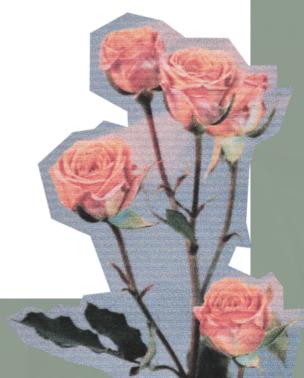
"Just a little word bout the damned" By M.S Blues

poor soul, sitting on the ashes of her damned spirit, contaminating the 'āina.

(everything i do – i do it wrong i deserve to – become an ancestor)

the damned retrieves a shovel from pa's tool room. she returns to the spot — the spot of self, the spot of ola.

6 feet deep sand grave.



"Just a little word bout the damned" By M.S Blues

she throws the beaten shovel aside, then grabs the matches.

slowly, she descends into the grave.

("goodbye, my dearest ola.")

the damned takes a final glance at the lavender, melancholy skies, cherishing the moments she had during this *ola*.

aesthetic of her *ola* – death. the end. for *the damned*.

she lights the *ahi*, and smiles, relishing in her final moments, before being welcomed by mother earth to her new 'āina, just across the *alaula*. the end.

"Serene Closure" By Vikasha Bhola

Atop that hill,
Amidst the flowering meadows,
We stood by the lake suffused with algae,
When I resolved to remain morose till
that sultry summer concluded.

Days blend into each other, as we cease to tend to each other. I have too many qualms. So, I reminisce our bindings, but it's too blinding.

My life waxes cold and drear.

It runs through my fingertips akin air.

The world seems deplorable, ruthless.

I wish to be secluded.

I wish to forever more be eluded.

It's arduous to try.
I despise those that pry
into my heart, that dying garden.
However I remain ardent
for a serene closure.

"Amy March By Gabriela Duharte

Well, I'm not a poet;

I'm just a woman.

I used to be one, once.

Back when the world was still new to me

And the soles of my feet planted

Seeds of wonder wherever they stepped.

I recall quiet days of green solitude and

Rambunctious days of sisterhood.

I would write and paint of those moments,

Etchings, once tethered to my mind,

Floating into the corridors of my beating

heart.

But the world has punctured my chest

In such a way that it can never be mended.

The curse of a woman's body

Was thrust upon me, a pure and innocent creature,

Sudden as a lightning strike

And cold as the shock of icy seas.

My days of girlhood seem so very distant now,

And I wonder if they only taste this bitterly sweet

Because I no longer have them to love and to cherish.

For so long, I held poetry in the highest regard—

She felt to me as just one of my older sisters watching over my frail body.

She has gone now, leaving only a shade of what she was,

Relenting her short-lived post to the destruction of female inadequacy.

"There's no forever in love By Julia Lacharity

I still wear your underwear,
The old plaid and new black pair.
Don't know how the next one will compare
To who I loved so dear.

I saw you today; couldn't help but stare. I noticed that your mom cut your hair. I sometimes wish I was still there In your kitchen sink.

I remember how we danced back there, Like a movie, you spun me with flair. A memory drowning me; I must gasp for air. The past suffocates me.

All the times that we would share—
To remember them, do you dare?
I don't think that leaving is fair.
My heart can be your house.

"Nothing is eternal" By MG

A voice asked in my head: If nothing ever stays, would anything matter?

But another voice replied: Does something have to stay forever for it to matter?

Sometimes I stayed awake and thought of death. Of heaven and hell and what lays beyond it all.

They say sinners would eternally suffer in hell and saints would be eternally happy in heaven.

But what is suffering and happiness in the face of such a thing as eternal?

For the first time, sure, the impact would be greater than you can ever expect.

For the first hundred years, or the first thousand years and the next, feelings may stay.

But how long would it last?

As time continued on its neverending path, until it seemed that we have gone beyond the time itself,

Emptiness?

Numbness?

Madness?

Or is it all combined?



what would be left?

Humans are happy because they can have only a tiny piece of the world. They can experience something for a mere sliver of time and bathe in it all, because everything is temporary.

Humans are happy because they can have only a tiny piece of the world.

They can experience something for a mere sliver of time and drown in it all, because everything is temporary.

But when everything lasts for eternity, could we even value them the same?

But when you can have everything, but when you can only have nothing, would anything hold meaning at all?

Humans live for tens to a hundred years.

They say forever while in fact, picturing a few measly years.

They think too little of forever.

They couldn't comprehend the thing they would never even



Because nothing is eternal, but nothing.

"Angel Tears" By Bianca Hănescu

In the silence of the night, on the wings of a dove, An angel descends smoothly, saying a futile goodbye,

An enchanting prayer of love, dedicated to the divine altar.

With eyes bathed in fleeting memories, voice dry with longing,

He continues to weep bitterly, silently, like a poor mortal.

The tears belonging to an invincible martyr pour on his waxen cheek,

Each one painted in the color of drying gold, Contrasting with the merciless dawn...

The gushing tears outline a howling soul,
Marching with wings that shatter and break,
Gently, in a cunning grove,
Sprinkled with forgotten dreams that materialize in ashes for you...

Under the gaze of the proud moon that shines atop the copper leaves,

Hides in the reeds the very suffering that seems to cheer... It even amuses itself when it watches as the wings struggle, Unable to shake off an incessant thought, frightening, indomitable.

The good angel sheds no tears of pain but of pure, celestial love,

For those lost in a wave of eternal agony and grief, Becoming prisoners of a world traced in chalk, an apparition...

But also for those who have lost their talisman, The courage to live in an incomplete cosmos, Ceasing to become so ethereally gorgeous.

The poor man lost in his nightmares has long stopped believing

In a fate aimed at midnight delay,

When the sole reward in this land of dust, bent by the whispers of the night

Is the very insipid memory of a tired soul,

Finally brought to its scraped knees by the claws of its dear friend, death...

The northern star of mankind remained at dusk the legend of the holy angel

That flew away with its wings of light from the sacred covenant,

Floating in a lost thought on the currents of faith, On paths masked in sorrowful, undisputable pain.

When the dawn finally breaks upon us all, And the fruitful day is reborn like a precious flower,

The angel turns into a magical thought, Entwining in distant tales of power.

The angel now smiles, lives fully, and has learned how to love life itself

As it suddenly heard a soft-spoken whisper, so surreal, a mirage cascading from Eden:

"Split your wings, tantalizing mirage, noble stranger, and float above the shallow waters of time

In lands unknown to humankind, where memory finally blooms tonight!"

"The field of poppies By Bianca Hänescu

Along the meadow of my soul, flooded with cascades of breathing, living torches,
The scarlet nuances blush atop the frail stems
As their gracious cousins lift some cheerful faces,
remodeling undefined shapes,
Their crimson cheeks swinging in a trance among
vicious thorns – the endless skyscrapers
Adorned with splendid petals, showcasing sublime
roses – ethereal ruby statues.

I gathered them one by one with the greedy hands of an innocent child,

Wandering in the gentle evening, utterly alone, admiring the alluring night sky,

Filling my shaky arms with a burgundy-red bouquet,

Flowers mimicking the sundown reflected in my eyes, fiery and delicate – a heavyweight.

And I returned at a late hour, laughing from the bottom of my very core

But the fairytale-like field remained far behind the shore,

Blocked by the atrocious memories that wished for everything to be a corrupted lie,

So lonely and desolate my oasis remained, lost in the labyrinth leading to Eden. But why?

Then, in blissful silence, I reached home, my sweet paradise,

To bind my greatest treasure into a blazing ruby, a juicy apple designed for my taste,

But, suddenly, to my utter surprise – there was an unexpected haste

All my poppies shed their crowns, discarded like tears on the firm ground

Bidding me a final farewell on their journey to the stars – a stabbing heartbreak,

Droplets of crystal clear diamonds erasing a spring's sonnet from my shallow heart.

Adieu, my tainted roses!

"Sun Ray" By L.R. Anderson



"Sun Ray" a representation of a sun ray directly cascading onto a little pink blossom, illuminating it for a mere moment before falling back into darkness

"The sanctuary of a poetess By Bianca Hänescu

Much like a rain of falling stars,

A myriad of heavy feelings pour forth behind me,

For everything I once failed to notice

Has transformed...suddenly, ineffably...

Into a penumbra of my bare soul,

Burdened by regrets of the distant past.

The sanctuary of a poetess,

Who often smiles at you with her pure soul

Is a hell engulfed in fervent emotions,

Childish, I might add;

Yet it spreads with all its might on a yellowed page,

Leaving its hidden mark,

As if it were a trivial, unresolved word,

Turned into everything it has not desired to be,

Indeed, the repulsion of a person who has lost

faith...

But our protagonist is drowned by suffering,

Caressed by a trotting of resounding sighs,

And her gaze is masked in an ocean of delicate

tears;

And her thinking...

The final weapon in her secret plan,
Fades into leaden clouds,
Making way for an infinite oasis, of a blinding blue...
A piece torn from Christ's basilica.

In the end, I have spoken enough about someone else, When that someone is the comical me, an atheist buffoon,

A fleeting being deprived of a plenitude of possible lives,

That lay too late, in vain...

On a bamboo scroll or perhaps on a heavy parchment?

But lives still hesitate to metamorphose

Into the single aspect desired by my cunning dreams,

A supreme existence, a world crowned with peace,

and why not...with splendid pain?

The heaven of a suffocated soul crucified on a golden cross,

Whispering to me with a faint, weary voice:

"Justice..."

Thus, it still hurts and I continue to write, In the silence of thousands of hostile nights, When tears slip through my words, Composing an unimaginable Machiavellian symphony,

And the comma, an accomplice in the waltz of creation, separates the burdens,
While the period ends my emotions in a dreadful climax.

"But what about me?" you all most likely ask.

I can only declare:

"I will remain a lugubrious question mark,

Founded on an insignificant pedestal,

Like a seraph maimed by fate,

Who has never known

The light that gives hope,

Considered by many to be the gift of gods: our

vicious life,

A solemn oath..."

'Angel who was once a girl.. By Bianca Hănescu

The memories that come, that go, swinging in the shadow,

Drown my soul atop a chariot of fire Melting my being in a malicious cascade, A downfall of ashes disappearing into the far horizon, Leaving behind a tray of striking regret and machiavellian phantoms...

Winter, the famous Snow Queen in a Danish fairytale,
Ardently faded into my shallow dreams
As the blizzard turned into midnight nostalgia
And no blistering cold vortex - a dreadful demise could
threaten what is yet to come,
To destroy everything around it - a greedy symphony

Do you still remember the serene spring evenings from so long ago?

When we fell asleep, cradled in each other's arms Admiring a whole field of fiery poppies, Two sisters reconnected in an agonizing, deceitful fantasy...

that lulls us in the dark.

I suppose not, my dear,

As you always lost yourself in utter oblivion, Becoming enamored with the scent of a dazzling lily, It seemed to me...

And you begged me on your knees to weave a crown of striking white,

A sublime gift dedicated to my lucky charm, a shy girl smiling at the galaxy of infinite stars...

I deeply regret...

For I no longer hold your delicate, noble hand – a lover's tender embrace;

Your trinket face now seems, a refreshing summer rain Running down your diaphanous cheeks and your eyes sparkle in Eden

To blind a poor, fleeting woman called Helen...

The deserted paths of summer were sprinkled with our baby steps in a sublime tandem,

While enjoying the glorious sun of July,

Laughing like a madwoman and delighting myself with the voice of an angel, A soprano chirping a graceful duet...

But in vain I hope and in vain I try to find you in the corrupted whirl of memories,

When all I have left is the Sunset Boulevard, a mirage at dawn

Empty of nuances and spontaneous bonds.

A beguiling roar encapsulates my vision, justifying a bitter existence

As I whisper a submissive, ending goodbye...

Farewell, my butterfly!

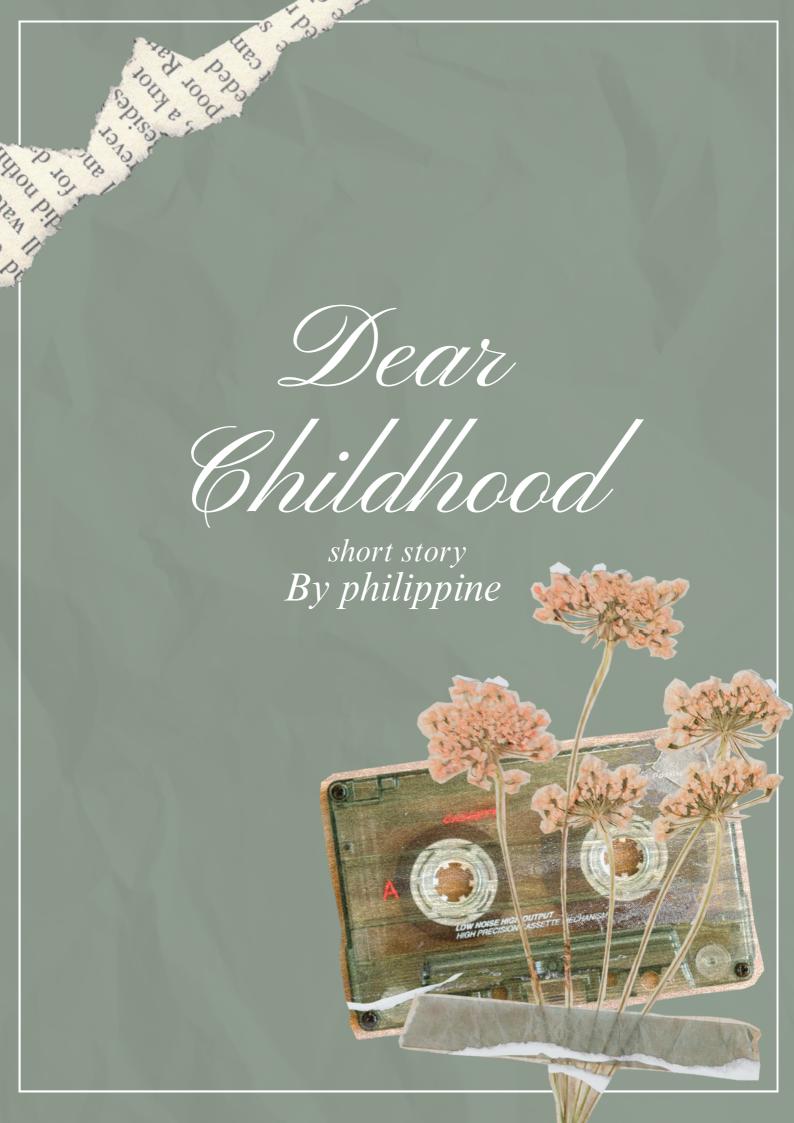
Farewell to a myriad of suns and moons pouring forth in thy presence;

Fairytale creature, plotting to revive the ancient prophecies,

Icon in the form of a divine goddess,

Angelical being taking flight on the wings of a ludic dove,

Wishing to attain heaven and beyond...



Dear childhood,

I wish I could sit there again, with you by my side. Filling the days with laughter and a feeling of such carefreeness my heart craves for it. I want to taste the rain,

I want to build a snowman with a carrot nose,

I want to make a flower wreath,

I want to feel the sea salt tangled in my hair

And I want to dance, enchanted, the way I only danced when I was with you, and I would only stop to fall into a field of daisies. Can you bring back those moments, dear childhood? When everything was beautiful and wonderful, and every blink of an eye could last an eternity? I want to just grab a whiff of it, simply the idea. Can you bring back the magical garden, dear childhood? In which stag beetles and hedgehogs live, in which my father grows the raspberry, the blackthorn and the elderberry. I could walk barefoot over the fragrant earth and then I'd sit there, my face smeared with berries and a smile that shines brighter than the sun.

Can you bring back the little house, dear childhood? With the wooden old stairs and the dusty fireplace. With the kitchen with the light blue tiles and the children's room where the walls are painted colourful. And then I'd sit there, in my mothers arms, and she would read a book to me until her voice makes me sleepy.

Childhood, can you take me in your arms again, for one last time? I would close my eyes and feel my little heartbeat going steady with yours. And then I'd fall asleep curled up in your lap. You'd gently stroke my hair and look after me the whole night. And in the morning time, you would be gone, leaving just a sweetly scent I cannot name. Do you cry for me, childhood? Because I am certain what we had is lost forever. I often sit alone in my room and stare at the no longer colourful wall. And then a soft tear rolls down my cheek. And soon another and another and another until I sit there and almost choke on my sobs. But I also smile, childhood, oh yes. I smile a lot when I remember the happy times spent, there, in the little house with the great, great garden. and I just want to sit there in this garden and eat my father's home made jam.

Oh, my heart longs. Will I ever see you again?

"Fading Memories" By Alisha K

Laughter hangs in the air,
there is beauty everywhere;
it is a lovely moment in time,
but alas, I know, it will only last for a while.
I foresee a day not far
when our paths will part.
The jokes we crack won't be funny for long,

and soon, the smiles we share will lose their glow.

The flowers I tucked behind your ear, will wither and die and disappear.

The immortal love in the snaps will fade away.

You may pause to smile, or you may turn away.

The friendship bracelet I weaved for you with love,

will become an annoying addition to your wrist and you'll take it off.

The realisation hits me with doom, It is all going to end soon.

"Where do deleted pictures go?" By Alisha K

They all say they are deleted
They can't be removed from Earth's face,
There must be a final resting place.
I click the delete button,
And empty my 'deleted' file;
Meant to go into the unknown,
They are still there for a long while.
The photos aren't there, oh alright,
But their ghost lingers for a while;
The ghost of the moments the snaps froze in time,
They are unfreezed, free to move as they like.
They aren't deleted yet, not really

They aren't deleted yet, not really,

They are conveniently replaced;

From my phone's gallery where the odds,

Are the lowest of ever willingly seeing them

again;

To my subconscious mind where their memory wanders wild,

Entwined with my invaluable thoughts, haunting my mind.



"Constellations" By Jocelyn Caruso



I drew stars on my arms for fun
Some asked me why
I tried to respond but I never had an answer.

I soon did it more often
Single stars that once freckled my arms
now are permanent constellations.
I stare at my arms, soon thighs and stomach

I notice they seem haunting.

To me they serve as a permanent reminder one single stupid moment that now lasts forever To others looking at me, it's all they ever see. They seem to always ask me why!

I drew them on for one man to see

Now they're all that define me permanently
I notice they seem to laugh at me
I'll try unsuccessfully to hide myself.



"Untitled", By Jocelyn Caruso

I remove my eyes, and carve my hips to bone my blood stained lips speak deathly tones In my heart, there are scars, in my head a hole I dissect every inch of myself in search of what you stole

My insides remain unoccupied
I deny my soul a home
Outside these walls she screams and cries
but I can't give what I've never known

An internal cacophony drowns out her sobs
I long for the silence from which I'm robbed
I collapse in on myself, my heart no longer fits
inside

My head aches, my bones are dried



I NEVER KNEW someone who tasted like salt until I met Kaia.

The first time I saw her, I thought I was seeing the sky for the first time. It was true cerulean, and I was the lone cloud passing by unbeknownst to her. Her eyes held the entire ocean, one of enormous depths. And a few blue summers ago, I dove headfirst and drowned in them.

Out of all the colors in the world, she painted my entire sky blue. I am constantly in various shades of blue—tranquility, sensitivity, and melancholy, just to name a few. As a poet, I'm the type of person who's quite intuitive with their own feelings, who feels perhaps too strongly and deeply about their thoughts. And my intuition had never felt so strong with anyone. That is, until Kaia.

She is the reason I will never feel so fiercely ever again.

It all began at the start of one particularly blue summer, at the end of one particularly forgotten high school year. Well, I've tried to convince myself that I've forgotten about it. But the truth shines through as I am writing this. Just like how the sun shone through the curtains of our old classroom that day, the smell of the sea wafting through open windows overlooking the ocean. I remember looking out on the horizon, trying to find the line where the sky met the sea. Then I recall the curtains as they rose, and like Kaia's hair, billowed out as if summer itself were reaching out to us. A gentle breeze complemented it, weaving through Kaia's hair and ruffling her skirt. Yes, I truly haven't forgotten it. I remember watching the sky, the sea—Kaia. My hands were itching to fill up the journal in my bag.

All I wanted to do was to go home, lie in my bed, and write myself to death.

That was the only way I could reach the sky, after all. Only ever from a distance. Exams were over, and Mrs. Keegan was giving us a final lecture. The lecture of our lives, as she'd called it. We were seniors then, in our final year of high school. Most of us had planned on going to the local community college, or leaving town altogether and finding a better place in the city to settle down. I think most of my classmates were tired of the ocean. Tired of salt air. Whatever the case, we were all going through a crucial stage in our adolescent years, about to

venture into the uncharted territories of adult life. Youth was a gift, as well as time, and we'd taken it for granted. We thought we had all the time in the world. But time slipped through our fingers like grains of sand. The end was just the beginning of our lives. And Mrs. Keegan had not failed in reminding us on our last day.

After another excruciating minute, the bell rang for dismissal. Everyone got up from their seats, hurriedly packing their bags and gathering their friends. Bidding goodbye to our teacher, they rushed out the door, excited cheers and vibrating chatter filling the hallway. The battle of high school was won. It was finally over. We were young, and the sky was the limit. The classroom emptied quickly. Soon, Mrs. Keegan left as well. And then, it was just me and her.

She was seated in the front row, while I was at the back beside the windows. I don't know why she stayed behind. Her friends had called for her through the doorway, but Kaia told them to go ahead without her,

44 that she had lost her pencil or something.

My heart pounded as she rummaged mindlessly through her bag. Was she making an excuse to talk with me alone? No, that thought couldn't be entertained. My brain liked to jump to conclusions, make oceans out of raindrops. That's how I drown.

I stood from my desk, the chair scraping the ground as my legs trembled with anticipation. When she made no further move toward me, I hung my leather bag over my shoulder and reluctantly made my way toward the door, prepared to leave as I always was. Down the middle aisle, I almost walked past her when Kaia met my eyes.

"Mari, right?" she asked.

My skin prickled, and I prayed I wasn't blushing. All the air seemed to go out of me. I swallowed before replying, "Uh, yes. I'm Mari."

Her lips went up in a smile. "Hi. My name's Kaia. Sorry, I'm not sure if you knew who I was because—you know—we rarely talk."

I rarely talk with anyone at all, I wanted to say. But I never let myself say what I want to say. So instead, I fumbled hard. "N—No, I know who you are," More than you could ever know.

Kaia chuckled. "I'm sorry. It's just that...you're so quiet and I didn't really know how to talk to you. I should've approached you sooner, instead of waiting until the end of the year." She gestured to our empty classroom, where my words have died within me each passing year.

And apparently, they've seemed to have died within her, too. Why do you have to be sorry, I wanted to say again. I'm the one who should be sorry. I had a thousand words to say, more than a lifetime could ever allow—yet I stood speechless before her.

"So, anyway," Kaia continued before I could formulate a decent response. I could never catch my words in time, especially when I needed them the most. "You're part of Kill Your Darlings, aren't you?"

I cleared my throat, palms sweating. My grip tightened around my bag strap. "Yeah, I am." Kill Your Darlings was the school's poetry club, which Kaia was also a part of and had been so for a couple years. Despite what you may think, I didn't join the club just so I could be close to her, though that certainly served as a bonus. All throughout my life, writing was my only friend, and to have a club I actually had interest in joining proved to be a highlight in my otherwise pathetic extracurricular history.

Through the club, I was actually able to put myself out there. And though it was absolutely nerve-wracking, reading my poems aloud for an audience during our club sessions, in the end I had no regrets.

Plus, Kaia was there, even when I pretended she wasn't. Not talking to her was my only regret.

"We actually have a tradition at the end of every summer where we read poetry on the beach by a bonfire," Kaia explained, her words rushing out of her like a river.

"It's incredibly special this year, since it's our last summer together as a club.

It's a way for us to showcase our work and stay in touch outside of school. I know it's only been your first year, and it can be daunting to share your writing, but it'd really be great if you could join us. I've seen some of your poetry during our sessions. You know, during the read-alouds. You have talent, Mari. I'd love to hear more of your pieces."

I wanted to pinch myself. Perhaps this was just a dream. She couldn't possibly be talking to me.

But the smell of salt came in through the windows once more, and my intuition sparked to life. I could make it up to her. Make up for lost time. Time we could've shared. You have talent, Mari.

"I wouldn't say I have talent, but sure," I said, for once without thinking too deep about it. "I'd love to join. When is it?"

"September 1st, so you have lots of time to write something great," Kaia winked at me like a star in the sky. "I'm sure you will."

"Thanks for inviting me,"

"No problem. You're always welcome, Mari."

Silence engulfed us, and we stood there awkwardly for another second before I said, "Would you—would you like to hang out sometime? During this summer?"

There was a gleam in Kaia's eyes, or maybe I was just imagining it. She looked uncomfortable, or maybe I was just imagining it. She was stunned by my own invitation, and I was starting to regret my words when a smile broke across her face. "Sure!" Kaia said sweetly. "I'm free any time. What's your number?"

And the rest was blue.

Blue skies, turquoise waters, paper airplanes, two girls running through the sea in our old navy school uniforms, rumpled skirts and sweaty shirts, splashing water at each other, walking along the shore, kicking up spraying sand, swimming in sparkling water, riding on the province train with no destination in mind, having picnics in the train tunnel, running along the tracks, feeding stray cats, sharing earphones at the bus stop, riding my bicycle with her arms around my waist, her cheek against my back, walking under the streetlamps at night with swinging arms, blowing bubbles into the summer wind, spilling our notebooks into the air, Kaia capturing my image on her beloved retro camera, our laughter echoing through time, me immortalizing her in my poems, turning her into a mythical sun goddess, thinking to myself she would last forever in my head, drinking her memory up like freshly squeezed lemonade, bathing in her warm touch like the sun's rays, spinning under summer showers, sneaking out to each other's houses, whispering secrets, dreams, and poetry in the night, letting her tie my hair up into a ponytail, me cutting her bangs, wandering into convenience stores for midnight snacks—we were living on a summer high. Snapshots of clouds in the sky. Days blended into each other, and so did we. My journal became an atlas of us. I kept maps of the stars in her eyes. I wanted to promise her "forever".

[&]quot;Truth or dare?" Kaia suddenly asked me.

[&]quot;Dare," I said after giving it some thought.

She smirked at me in the dark. "Someone's feeling brave today,"

We were sitting across from each other in my room, underneath the fading moonlight coming through my windows. "Hit me with something good," I teased.

"What if I want you to do something illegal? Like, let's say, steal something for me?" I want to steal you, I wanted to say. But of course I didn't.

"I'll do whatever you want me to," I said instead.

"Hmm, okay then," Kaia tilts her head, humming. "I dare you to do the first thing that comes to your mind."

"What's on my mind?"

"Yes," she readjusted her posture excitedly. "Listen to your mind and do whatever it tells you to do. Right now."

She was my breath, my reason for living, and I was her...

I don't know what I was to her. Because after that one dying summer night—the night I tried to kiss her and tasted salt on her tongue—Kaia didn't see me for days.

Actually, she didn't see me for the rest of the summer.

Summer's remaining days became raindrops, tears, and unfinished poems. I sought after her, with burning questions and *I'm sorry's* dying on my lips because the guilt of what I'd done drove me crazy. But texts went unanswered, calls unreturned, knocks at her door ignored. I was banned from her life.

And then September came like a bitter aftertaste.

As promised, a bonfire was set up on the beach, crackling in the afternoon sun. Though it was out, obscured by a few clouds, the weather had gotten colder,

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much earlier than expected in the months leading up to fall. The members of Kill Your Darlings gathered around the fire with notebooks in their hands. Our poetry teacher, Mr. Ridley, had arranged benches around the fire. I was sitting alone, not sure what to do with myself. Kaia was chatting with some of her friends in the club, laughing about their well-spent summer days and ruminating about college life. I don't think she mentioned me. She hadn't even bothered to look in my direction. I think she was hoping I wouldn't show up. The air was stale between us, and I wanted to leave. But I stayed anyway.

Because my chest was caving in. And I wanted to spit my heart out before it attacked me. Mr. Ridley opened up with a background of this bonfire tradition, giving the same details that Kaia had told me. It was our last spoken word exercise, except instead of a stuffy classroom, we were doing it outdoors this time. He explained that we were to read out the poems we wrote over the summer—reflections about burdens and challenges we faced during the past school year as emerging youth or simply anything that we wanted to get off our chests—give a short explanation about our inspiration, and throw our written musings into the fire as a way of saying goodbye. Letting go. New beginnings and all that utter nonsense. Because it never really began for me.

Students weaved poems about graduation, growing up, struggles at home, the prospect of the future, and the regrets they had. After which, they all threw their poems into the fire, adding fuel to its rage.

When it was Kaia's turn, she spoke about her parents' expectations for her, how she stressed over getting the highest grades, soared for extreme achievement, burned herself out from chasing dreams that weren't her own. She ended with how she found her voice through poetry, and how her words were the only semblance of control she had in her life. The art of writing verses saved her in the midst of detrimental academic stress.

Kaia tossed her poem into the fire, and I watched it burn. Among the applause that followed her performance, I don't think she noticed I clapped for her.

Finally, Mr. Ridley called my name as if he were reading out my death sentence. I stood, knees trembling, walked toward the bonfire, and faced my peers. Faced her. She offered me a reluctant smile, like she didn't have a choice but to be a supportive friend. Friend. What an awful way to die. What an awful title to be reduced to. If she even still considered me as one.

But we were back to being strangers again.

I fetched my crumpled paper from my pocket with shaking hands. And as my voice quivered—as the sky fell and the sea rose—I read the poem I wrote for the girl I loved. notes on a blue summer

I watched my love go up in flames

And threw my heart into the sea

There is a hole in my chest this summer This is what you've done
to me

Are you proud of yourself?

I hope you are

The way you painted me in shades of blue I am your greatest masterpiece

Like the legendary poet Sappho
I fell from my rock for you
I drowned myself for you
And like the sailor that you are
You left me to my waves
Instead of you, water filled my lungs

Taking away every breath I gasped for you Washing away every tear I shed for you

I sink into your depths

My heart, a stone tied around my ankles You didn't even think to toss me a lifeline To let me know there's still room in your boat Because of you, I no longer float

You are gravity

I'm the heaviest thing on earth

A poet has drowned in a sea of her words and tears A siren whose song is forever lost in the currents Cursed to lure men to their deaths

I want to pull you under
I want us to drown together
But you never once fell for my voice

I will never be the death of you
I should have told you
During that fateful blue summer

I should have declared it all over the world Magnified my touch in every way

Tucking your curtains behind your ears I should have walked on water

Because my faith in you was strong enough I should have looked more closely

Memorized every brush stroke Every grain of sand on your face

Every time your waves lapped my shores Every time your pale sky met my horizons

But now I bike alone

On the road with the old train tracks
The brick tunnel we claimed was ours
I claimed your mouth of billowing smoke As I rode on your

tongue,

I jumped off in fear Sliding down the grassy hill

And never thought of boarding you again I watch what could've been

Slide along in a steady rhythm
While my heart sends fluctuating pulses through me When the
school bell rang that day

I gave up on asking you to stay You never stopped to look at me To notice me like I notice you How can you go through a flower field Without picking at least one for yourself to keep?

Because I am yours to keep

If only you want me

If only you want me
I'd let you pick me, even if it would kill me
But I linger alone in my sea of yearning
Without your heart as my anchor
In my purgatory of eternal longing
Because I will never reach heaven
The sky's the limit, they say
The ocean is the limit
My love is the limit
Just look above, then look below
You can find me
I was just a wistful cloud

I was just a wistful cloud Passing through your sky I was just a drop

In your unexplored ocean
And because of you,

I am forever unmoored

I crumpled the paper, feeling like I'd just read a eulogy. Like I'd wasted my words for nothing. No one. Everyone raised their hands in applause, and I didn't look to see if she was doing the same.

"That was excellent, Mari!" said Mr. Ridley. "You had a great use of metaphors, and command of language. You really got me in my feelings, to be completely honest." I gave him a small smile. "Thank you, Mr. Ridley."

"I'm glad you could join us today. That you had the courage to share your words 54

with us. Now, what made you write this particular poem? You don't have to say if it's too personal, of course. But if you can, please tell us what inspired you."

I wanted to say: It started, like all love affairs did, as a silly little crush. An infatuation that I knew would never come to fruition. I dismissed it as nothing. I was just a high schooler, after all. What did I know about first love?

But that's exactly what she became. It was a strange feeling, as if I were pining after the sky. Who knew three scandalous words would be the most brutally difficult truth to tell? My body did everything it could just to not look at her. But something possessed me, and I

found myself meeting her wide-eyed gaze across the bonfire. She looked mildly alarmed, like she was afraid of what I might say. That I would name her as the culprit of all my silent suffering, the catalyst for why I will never speak her name again. Why I will hold my words back for the rest of my life. Because she is the reason I am unable to speak.

Something cold gently touched the bridge of my nose, and we all looked up as snow fell from the open sky. Everyone gasped, turning their eyes from me to this once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon. It had been years since it snowed on the beach. My mouth parted in awe, since I never got the chance to witness it myself. Until now.

And I might never again.

"Everyone, settle down," said Mr. Ridley, after a moment of disorientation had passed. The snow had gotten everyone in a daze. "Let's finish this up, please. Go ahead, Mari. Tell us about your muse. What is your poem about?"

I shivered as people turned their heads back toward me, but they were still distracted. All except Kaia. We looked at each other, the world freezing around us. It was just us two again. She had put on a mask of passive expression, a stubborness in feigning ignorance about us. I sensed that she knew I was talking about her. And I knew then that I was going to spare her. Because despite how much I wanted to reach out and touch her—find out what on earth was going on between us—I was going to let her live.

Even if it would kill me.

When I found my words again, they weren't addressed to Mr. Ridley. They were addressed to the ghost in my heart.

"Just some girl," I croaked, and sent my poem into the fire, the flames sending tears into my eyes. What goes unsaid yearned to be yelled on rooftops. And when all is said and done, it's back to ashes once again.

Salt still stung the wounds on my tongue.



You have reached the end of issue TWO:

rhemerai

Again, Thank you to all the contributors! THIS ISSUE WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU

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