

creative writing

ANTH

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solihu11 sfc

**G**uided by filtered moonlight, upon a sombre statue at whose body cascaded down the thin delicate lace which lay upon it. Curves and skin which had been studied and watched, posed to learn and yearned for more than knowledge. It stood exposed to the elements and open to onlookers, delicate in its exposure, marks of different and varied touches, some marked red and angry, some pink and flowery, gentle, and marked with fingertips. She stands there and breathes, stook in time watching by-passers, they talk about all sorts of things, missing animals, teatime, local executions. All still relative to the world she understands, one where tea and dancing and teaching young girls to play the piano and boys to learn to fence is extensively encouraged, one where secrets behind closed doors cost screams and pain. She sees things. She sees the torture and the heartbreak and the lack of simple sympathy. She watches the watchers as they ruin the life of others, and from this she earns her mark of violence, her pink marks, which dip down her sculpted body as she watches their insides unfold.

Lilly Mole

# Change

**C**hange courses through the veins of its subjects,  
Warping wrinkle-less skin into overlapping flesh.

Your bones are brittle from the pressures,  
of a labouring life postponing your eternal rest.

Cast back to the perishing sun  
Stretching so far, my eyes couldn't see  
Do you recall taking this light?  
Unjustly stealing it away from me?

Hands stroke the crown of my dying mind  
Foreign hands that became estranged  
The head they caressed, once flourishing  
Has been captured, tormented, deranged.

Change will seal man's fate  
But you had sealed mine  
My string cut loose, you have no excuse  
For bitterly wasting my time.

Alexsa Newbold

# Nyctophobia

I wake suddenly. There's a lingering discomfort of a nightmare now forgotten, and a cold sheen of sweat rests upon my skin. I fumble for my phone on my bedside table and turn the torch on, wary of the bright light assaulting my eyes. Knowing I won't be sleeping again soon, I reluctantly leave the safety of my bed for my medication.

The kitchen isn't far, but the walk will be tense. As I step out of my room, I'm overly aware of the suffocating silence of my sleeping house. The slow ticking of the clock at the bottom of the stairs is the only sound that breaks through the vacuum of silence consuming my home. With only the light of my phone's torch to guide me, I take the first step through the blanket of darkness.

I'm all too conscious of my vulnerability in the shadow that surrounds me on all sides, wary of the unseen. The longer I stand deliberating whether I should just turn back, the stronger I feel the dark closing in around me; shadows, twisting and pulsing, bleeding into my vision, folding in around me, taking my breath, beating my heart, filling my lungs-

Impulsively, I rush down the stairs, heart pounding. Each step reminds me of the distance I still have left of what I had earlier perceived as a short walk. My legs ache with the intense exertion I'm putting them through so soon after waking up, and I'm reminded, stupidly, of the evenings where my friends and I would run through the fields as a last grasp at the freedom of our teenage years. Truthfully, I never did feel free, I've always been grasping; freedom doesn't like being caught, and my pathetic fears only seemed to repel it further. I focus my attention back on traversing the steps. I wish I left this fear behind as I did my teens.

Beatrix Newman

My feet thud as I finally make it to the bottom of the staircase and as I still, the paranoia increases. Tentatively, I turn my head for what must be the third time, heart beating a million times faster than I've ever known it to, palms sweating, chest rising and falling as I pant with exhaustion.

It's just darkness I see when I turn, as the rational part of my brain had known it would be, but I gaze into the abyss longer this time, having made it to the bottom of the never-ending stairs and not having my attention split between traversing steps and glancing backwards. I need to look away, I realise, as the dark seems to have begun forming shapes, twisting and folding around each other, but all looking at me. I tear my gaze away, knowing it's my paranoid mind forming these shapes from nothing, and the all-consuming rush of blood in my ears fades to a dull thudding in sync with the beat of my heart.

It's three big steps to the doorhandle into the living room, then about twenty rushed steps to the kitchen. I steel my resolve; I can do this.

One step. Something moves in my peripheral vision. Two steps. Movement again. One more step. Black tendrils of fog wind and intertwine, snaking towards me in nauseating patterns. Their movements are sporadic: they lurch and stutter then ripple and flow and then

spike and reach out again. Any concerns I had about the well-being of my eyes have evaporated; I reach for the light switch and press it after frantically fumbling along the wall. I hear the familiar clack, but after waiting for the usual delayed flicker and electrical hum, the light does not turn on. My stomach churns: it feels like I've been dunked into ice-cold water.

The dark ribbons advance faster than my mind can process. I scrunch my eyes closed, bracing for the strike. Something vile strokes past my ribs; it's so cold it feels almost wet. It slinks around my left shoulder and flows to the underside of my right. More whispery tendrils meet my legs and torso and pulse along my skin. They interlace with my limbs, wrapping and constricting. They snake around my neck and flow around the backs of my ears then across my forehead and penetrate the sockets of my eyes. More of the repulsive ribbons ripple along my chest and up towards my chin. They work at my lips, slivers of shadow slip in through the corners and feed more and more of the tendrils through until my mouth is wrenched open and the darkness floods into my throat. I choke, gag, whimper, nothing stops the torrent of repulsive matter from filling my being.

I am caged inside myself, can only watch as I'm consumed, imprisoned within my own fear.

Beatrix Newman

# The Mask

**W**ith shaky hands, I place the mask on my face; its shape slots onto my features as though it were made solely for me and a pleasant numbness creeps along the edges of my mind. I dazedly glance back up at the mysterious cloaked figure in front of me as the fuzziness grows intensely. The cloaked figure raises their hand with ominous calculation, they point at me once more, and the numb feeling that was once creeping surges forward, enveloping my mind with such fervour, fighting it would be futile. I am certain now, this is right, this was always meant to be. There is no other feeling but this, this bliss, this ecstasy, I belong here in the warmth and safety, I do not need to think another thought.

Beatrix Newman

# Sun radiates off man-made structures.

**D**usty brick wall is split and cracked,  
Heavy footfalls smack against hot concrete path,

Heat waves up from fractured earth,

Sun beats down on wilting fleurs.

Thunder cracks its foreboding call

And cold droplet begins its fall,

Parched ground drinks in desperate,

People cry out and bolt to be sheltered.

Withered flowers mourn when rain sufficed,

Concrete criticises flowers for cowering.

Beatrix Newman

# The Kitten

Saira Khan

He was alone in the giant mansion that he calls home, sitting in his dark blue painted room with music blasting through his headphones when he decide to go to the kitchen to find some food, placing the headphones around his neck he opened the door with an irritating creek leaving the comfort of his room, he feels a chill hit his arm with the change in temperature. He turns right and walks down the long hall to the wooden staircase, once at the bottom he makes a left walking quickly past the closed basement door, a draft of cool air coming through the slight gap between the door and the frame around it.

He reaches the kitchen opening the cupboard and reaching in to take some of the snacks when his head snaps to the right hearing a loud thud come from the corridor causing him to stop and

stare in that direction for a minute before turning back to the initial task, another sound causes him to stop and inch toward the direction in which it came, his brows furrowed in confusion, slowly walking step by step towards the sound, towards the door that leads to the basement.

He stands face to face with the wooden, white door with a gold handle and lock, making it almost inviting with the beauty that conceals what horrors wait beyond. He moves a hesitant hand toward the door handle, wrapping his hand around the cold metal only slightly flinching at the touch, twisting it to the left he pulled on the door.

Nothing.

It was locked. Relief flooded his face, before walking back to the kitchen, he gathered what he

# The Kitten

Saira Khan

wanted his arms wrapped around all the snacks he could carry as he made his way back to his room and shut the door.

He hears a loud roar come from downstairs, which startles him, so he makes his way toward his desk and picks up cricket bat, holding the weapon he leaves his room cautiously moving down the stairs and to the table in the hallway where the front door is and picks up a set of keys from a bowl and goes to the basement door once again, inserting the key and twisting the lock, he opens the door hit by a strong gust of wind.

Moving observantly down the wooden planked staircase, he lands at the bottom and reaches for the light switch the lights flicker for a heartbeat before consuming

the room in darkness once again. He digs in his pocket for his phone and using the flashlight to search for where the sound came from spotting a box of Christmas decorations that had fallen over, picking up the box he sees something move in the shadows, he inches in the direction of the motion only to find a large plastic container on its side, and inside it a ball of silver tinsel.

It moved, gripping the weapon tighter he moves closer and sits next to it untangling the tinsel to find a black kitten. He turns to take the animal back to his room but when he leaves the basement his back to the door shadows begin to crawl behind him.

# If I Were Anything

I'd be broken moonlight on a summer breeze.  
Cradled through the leaves and

Stilled on the shattered asphalt,

To lay and freeze.

The call of an unknown bird.

So near yet too far

To notice her gentle melody on the wind,

Singing to be heard.

A shell in a quiet wave. Vacant.

Carried unevenly through the tide

Until palmed in a pool on the coast,

Still drowning. Stagnant.

Drew Pittaway

# Drew Pittaway

## Parable of the heart

What a gift it is to know

The beauty of love.

How gentle an eye can

Rest in your gaze,

How a feeling can last

minutes-

hours-

days-

months-

years-

# Drew Pittaway

And never leave you alone.

So persistent.

Clawing at your chest,

Ripping skin and tearing

Tendons to reach you,

But god the pain is sweet.

For there is no sleep for

The lover, but much rest

For the loved.

No shame in the loudness,

Infinity in the silence.

To share music, toothbrushes,

hands, lips, clothes, meals,

words, stares, beds.

Can you share what is already

# Drew Pittaway

Yours? Theirs?  
O can you share a life?  
To see divine souls in mortal  
Bones. O you are  
My idol, my sin, my salvation,  
My religion.  
To breathe in their air  
And bathe in their shadow,  
Praying to the golden calf  
Because before you I was not:  
Love is Creator.  
Present in the click of rings  
'Twixt knotted hands,  
The whisper of cotton in  
Chaste-less sheets  
And the warmth of a second  
Sun. The moon is my  
Witness, the stars are my jury,  
I will love without reserve,  
We will love loudly, for  
What a beauty it is to know  
The gift of love.

# Loose Me

**M**y love for you was once a cast which drew  
o'er us both, a haze of blue which you  
glazed and shun and halted within, no sign  
of regret or care - to I - a lone.  
With you my heart was the only vein and  
cord, tying us in an overhand  
knot as I tugged and pulled. The rain came  
down and shuddered through the abyss of  
an unrequited intertwinement, so  
further down the line I've slipped into  
another loop. Oh you, I fear, have dent-  
ed me as this constrictor knot draws tight.

Amponsaa Adu

But the new love I bare, as I  
waver through the closing hollow is far from  
what I braved to endeavour. The raging waves  
and clipped cliffs blaring “wait” as the ends  
straighten and the cord severs...  
  
and I loose myself.

A bondage of collateral damage is now anchored  
by a burning desire for what should have been.

A catch, a glimpse, a lifetime, pride and  
everything of him

Oh you, I fear, my once blue heaven –

I wish I could voyage back... but as the cord

Extends toward home, I can only hope

To Harbour there

and leave the east out back.

# Colours

**T**here are no colours  
But the ones in your eyes  
I see nothing but darkness  
And pain, hurt and lies

You showed me colours  
You gifted me sight  
There is so much more  
Than black, grey or white

I didn't know I was colourblind  
Until the shadow fell  
I notice it now  
Im not feeling well

I'll be waiting  
For your colours to return  
I'm desperate for the light  
I need it to burn

But now its dark  
Its all dark

Amber Stanley

# 61 Years Flipped

**O**n endless cycle of day and night  
I refuse to fix my tangled thoughts  
While I take part in today but really, it's the opposite  
Talking to my friends, I found myself writing notes  
my anxiety the size of a planet  
Distracting myself from the unconcerned crowd  
holes in my skull  
Yet nothing but hatred fills my mind to the brim  
From the egotistical perception in my brightly lit eyes  
Which ends up isolating the untainted soul  
Till them morning, evening and night  
The hatred constricts the soul from breathing  
Inhale, exhale but I can't breathe  
And so, the untainted soul blends in with the future majority  
Of my inner functions that will gradually come to an end of being happy  
But not a word is spoken outside

Zara Zai

Those fixed emotions cultivate my personality  
The back spine dizzies from the constrained walls that flare up in anguish  
Those brightly lit eyes experiencing nothing but trauma  
In which even the closest walk by, no remorse  
Screaming for help in my inner centre  
And the world still spins  
One would outcry for someone to ask  
But the truth concerns more when your dead  
You'll be a memory without a care in the world  
That's when I found my true purpose in life  
Yet day by day  
It becomes an ongoing struggle not having anyone understand around you  
While the one friend above always believes in you  
Who knows your worst secrets known to human  
Theres a light yet to be drawn to my body

Zara Zai

# Two Trees

The tree of life stood pathetically underneath my mind

i was walking amidst the crowd to blend

mind fogged from agonising twinges and by-passers

why does humanity end up in a cycle of conflict?

and our colours are watering down

and the branches were so firm they curled towards one another

feeding into my escapism

while my ancestors fought other humans in war

burning greed, hatred but love is held within hearts

those life were not meaningless they serve as an example to us all

yet mind and bodies ruined

we live once and consume in our own selfish desires

aware that we can pursue enteral life after death

yet these creatures continue to dismantle with no recognition

dreams of freedom erased

the branches curdle further

while I feel deep sonder in the traffic maze

are we all side characters to people's stories?

i say, as I reminisce the connection tugging from above

yet suddenly the switch fails me

the roots that were once tied relinquished

cursed figures accompanied around standing out even more

distinct colour ranges lighten my presence

but concerns me to the core

the earth still lacks its spark

with personalities burned away

socialising became a far target that people failed to reach

no matter how close our skins feel

the souls can't find each others beat

for me, I can't seem to figure out why i'm so alone

needy of being someone's favourite person

this anxiety lying to faces just never stops faltering

to the point I fall of the edge

with this pain inside my chest got no choice but to carry on

Zara Zai

the spite of fear exhales from the eye  
that speaks

while the thin, veiny branches contin-  
ues to broaden

i could never seek love, a specific other

a soulmate which you can never find  
by walking right now

am I another story to ye, mine first  
love

who, my dear I already dug two graves  
for us

fate asks me what will happen next

i said ask me tomorrow

though tomorrow is never promised

the poison tree started lurking through  
mindlessly

creating a canvas piece with nothing  
but the emotions I pent up

life never ended because I tripped on  
a rock

a lone apple stands atop the poison  
tree

the only hope behind all the hell...  
just let it happen

Zara Zai

# Twilight

**T**he stars don't speak, but still, they know,  
The paths we take, the way we go.

Two shadows move, yet light they find,

A tether strong, a fate entwined.

A name half-whispered in the dark,

A steady hand, a fleeting spark,

Not all is said, not all is seen,

But in between – there's you and me.

If time rewinds or slips away,

If silence drowns the words we say,

One truth remains, still shining through –

In all that is, there's only you.

Merlyn Downs

# Haiku

**A** lone flower blooms

Through the cracks of the concrete

Nature finds its way

Merlyn Downs

# Empty Harbour

**T**he tide dragged you away –  
a ship that set sail in silence,  
its anchor severed,  
its compass lost.

The ocean swallowed the sky the day you left,  
its salt burned my tongue,  
its waves filled my lungs.  
I try and call out your name,  
but only the wind answers,  
its voice fractured and pale.

They say grief is a weight,  
but it feels more like a hollow,  
a cathedral of echoes  
where your laugh used to live

Merlyn Downs

The world still turns –  
indifferent,  
unforgiving.  
The clock ticks  
like hammer blows,  
smashing time into fragments  
I can't piece together without you

I carry you now  
in the marrow of my bones,  
in the cracks of my voice,  
in the quiet spaces  
between each breath.

Still, I light my candle,  
a faint flicker against the dark,  
hoping that somewhere, you see it,  
and know I am still searching  
for you.

Merlyn Downs

# The Unknown

**T**he unknown is gnarled and putrid, my heart ruptured,  
Done with the lucid, with the unstructured structured.  
Whatever it is, whatever it reaps thick or seeks sick.

Unexplainable, twisted, hastily listed, images.

Causing atrophy, vacant, stagnant, illnesses,

Eyes slipped through my teeth as witnesses,

The mind's vivid visuals, non-declarative memories.

How do I explain the unexplainable to someone?

The images too twisted to churn into their minds.

There is no winning in what is already vanquished,

As a fair warning to everyone. Keep to the known,

What is shown, don't dig deep, you will bleed.

This was my regretful overstep into the unknown.

Alex Marcu

# Seed

The day was lazy and bleak as the warm summer afternoons usually are in the countryside. A shallow wind gently nuzzling itself into tree branches, a lulled butterfly nestled itself onto a wilting rose. The dark afternoon sun bows down to the clouds as it set upon the horizon. The gate which in-cased the camp started to wither and jolt. The heavy metal scratching against its steel poles and dancing with the mud beneath it. The sound screeched and shrieked, overtaking the shallow wind. From upon the dusty dirt from which I was sitting. Pulling myself up on my bruised knees. My legs took me toward the sound, slowly, not cautiously, closer toward the fence.

The wind had stopped blowing and the fence had stopped withering, the only noise the soft footsteps toward danger. Behind the bushes a limb could be made out, twisted and mutated and bloody, the stains dying the mud on which it lay. It was attached to a body. One arm reaching for the fence, the other holding desperately onto its side, which sat about a pool of red. On the floor, laying, again it moved, yanking at the fence, pulling and contorting its already ripped limbs from its body, more and more flesh ripping and pulling and whimpering. I walk over, slowly, stranding next to the head, its mutated body stops and turns to look at me, its eye is swollen, and on the other side of its face a gaping hole, in which was nothing but black. Its eye stares back at mine and into my veins. I crouch down, close to it. And cover its eye with one hand and gently pull it from my back pocket, to which I guided it to her matted, blood sticky hair.

From where the body lay, I stood, my own actions a verse toward that of which the dead body could no longer do. The strong smell of iron blood filled the air from my also now stained hands. I could no longer see it as I walked away, I let my hand fall and my fingers dance with the metal which made up the fence. From there I followed the creak, waddling along next to the lake by our house, the one with the fences.

Coming back to the house I found myself sitting and staring at the bright red door, why would anyone pick such a

colour when it was that which was inside us. Why decorate with our organs, why embrace our life source anywhere but ourselves.

Walking toward it has felt like a chore recently, every time I did so I could feel the resistance of my legs, my arms, even my core. From where all the joy I have ever felt in my life had resided, I now feel a seeping pain, as if those who I have harmed wish the same upon me. Cutting through my limbs, ripping me apart at the edges. And wishing upon me the worst torture of all. Living with myself.

From those the grey, browner bricks seemed to look more appealing now my brain had photographed the colour red as death. The sweet strawberry fields, the apples which grew from blossoms every year. All now dripping with it, our insides. as any girl would

once, she has experienced it. The painful cracking of girlhood. And once it had, not one man looked at you the same. it was as if I had hanged myself on a cross for them to admire, being a verse which one pretends to worship but then pains, causing blood to drip down its naked, tired flesh.

It wasn't much longer before it ended. In minds and in souls, from upon where our value once sat now slumps an unappreciated mothering which we concede to, from being in control and thinking one's own thoughts, you will see how they wish not for your soul and only forever your bones, and the marrow which you keep hidden. Do not concede, fully. Allow your bones to become broken, welded into a new shape, one only made for purposes of others, head forever slumped down in submission, so that the neck is operantly stiff, but do not give them your blood, for it is what they crave.

The sun is beginning to set by the time I manage to walk through the blood saturated doors, it creaking openings warning me into the house-like shack. The night crawled all around me, invading spaces and contorting into sunken shadows on the walls, like fingers gripping around its neck and squeezing as a snake would around to choke out the light. The changing of light to dark is how the phase will go, from one bone to another, traveling through veins and cells.

The struggle however is comforting to watch, in a way.

# Tooth and Claw

**I** have never left a place clean.  
I have never loved without blood.

If you pull me apart,  
you'll find bite marks on the walls of my heart,  
scratches down the ribs,  
fingernails buried in the wreckage

I do not let go – I fight my way out.  
I gnaw through the sinew,  
rip the tendons with my teeth,  
carve escape routes into flesh and bone.

Every goodbye drags itself from my throat,  
clawing, snarling, refusing to die quiet.

Every loss leaves a wound  
that never quite closes.

If you see me walking away,  
know that I did not go willingly.  
Know that I left a part of me behind,  
and took a part of you with me

# The Night Comes Near

**T**he night comes near  
The winter wind dancing  
With the arrival of fear

Silent is the cheer

The watchful eyes glancing

The night comes near

All words are insincere

True meanings lancing

With the arrival of fear

Her smile a souvenir

The pain advancing

The night comes near

The stars will reappear

Their glimmer entrancing

With the arrival of fear

Their harrowing gaze austere

The eyes of death romancing

The night comes near

With the arrival of fear

Mahana Hossain

# Poems

## Gym Haiku

Pondering in pain,

The metal speaks in my ear,

“It is all futile.”

## Aged reflection

It feels like I've lived, a lifetime adrift,

Captive in the walls of philosophy,

When did all the time leave?

Alex Marcu

# Beautiful Days

One day the sun rose over a field luscious and green,  
Where we chose to stick together like clover leaves.  
running along with our dogs in-between,  
jumping over the stream as it winds and weaves,  
giggling ourselves dizzy into a dream.

Evie Sheehan