

ISSUE # 2

OUTWRITE EZINE



Amino:EDGY PATCH

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

RNAB • REAH DHEENSHAW • JAQI HINKLE • MX KADE • EMMA BISHOP
TYLER JOHNSON • OLIVE ELZINGA • ASH BARNARD • CHARLIE MARIE
JENNIFER BROOKE • TARYN MULDOON • AVA WEBB • AARON SMAIL
KAI SJERVEN • LY BEATON • ARIA STEWART • RIPLEY STEVENS

OutWrite Issue 2 - September 2019

This year's OutWrite eZine has collected many poetry submissions from LGBT+ youth 13-21. As the second annual eZine, we are proud to present the amazing talent found in today's youth. All with diverse experiences and knowledge, these poets share their wisdom through creative and soulful stories.

The authors are mainly based in Victoria and Vancouver Island but these pieces can provide powerful and personal messages all over Canada/the world. With intentions of spreading awareness of LGBT+ issues, comforting words those in need, and to inspire others to rise and stand for what they believe in, the eZine and all the lovely authors who submitted their works hope to achieve the previously stated goals through celebrating the beauty in untamed poetry and the young and proud LGBT+ community.

Enjoy the following poetry and let the stories inspire you to stay strong, to try writing your own, and to share these beautiful pieces with family and friends!

Silke Staffeldt-Jost - Youth Editor
Victoria Pride Society Youth Leadership Council

For our second annual OutWrite publication, we are thrilled to showcase the talents of 17 poets and welcome our new Youth Editor, Silke.

Let me share how OutWrite gets published. In the late Winter, we do a call for poetry submissions, they are reviewed by a committee of writers, and then the collection is published the following Fall on our Website. The categories are up to 14, 15 to 17, and 17 to 21. For outstanding submissions in each category, poets are invited to read their poetry at VPS and community events throughout the year. All poets receive an honorarium, reviewer notes when they're available, and a publication certificate.

The poems in this year's collection are impactful and enjoyable for all ages. They are an extraordinary survey of themes important to our families and communities. In fact, new this year, the poems are organized by theme: Love, Experiences, Metaphorical, and Inspiration. group is indicated using a colour code.

We encourage you, the reader, to print the PDF out and share in your homes, your schools, and your organizations. Share the electronic version in your networks as well.

Lastly, to the youth reading these poems, we hope you find familiar reflections and resonance here. Whether it be through poetry, art, music, or whatever your medium, we wish you inspiration to tell your own stories.

Kelly Legge - Editor
Chair of Victoria Pride Society Youth Initiatives

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A Trans Boy

By RNAB (poem category: *Experiences* – age: 13-14)

Binding his chest and getting stabbed by needles.
Looking at them and wishing he was one of them,
wondering if they can see right through him,
that is the life of a trans boy.

One whisper of the wrong name or pronoun
will send his stomach into reverse,
it will make his heart pound,
his guts feel a wave of anxiety zipping through them,
hoping, praying
that he will never run into somebody that knew who he was,
that is the life of a trans boy.

Looking at his hips expand as he punches himself,
holding up his favourite shirt
and realizing that his chest sticks through
and his binder shows.
Hating himself,
hitting himself, that is the life of a trans boy.

Who can he trust, who can he tell,
which friends will stick with him
no matter who he is,
wishing and wishing
that he could rip off his shirt like the other boys.
Swimming with a sticky swim shirt on, it's normal enough to the rest of
the world,
but to him,
it's uncomfortable, he doesn't like it.
He wants to swim topless,
but he can't,
that is the life of a trans boy.

It might seem so hard for this trans boy to live,
for he always seems so full of fear,
but I can tell you,
he is mighty proud to be queer.

dear "dad"

By *Reah Dheenshaw* (poem category: *Experiences* – age: *13-14*)

To the father I never had,
 I hope you're living life to the fullest,
 As I seem to be wasting my tears on someone who left,
 Who never calls and someone who decided to erase me from their life,
 I craved your attention,
 I needed your love,
 But I was never someone you thought of.
 I wanted to cry and tell you how much it hurts that you live your life full of lies.
 Now I can waste my words on you,
 I can cry out my pain but you'll never listen because I wasn't worth your perfect ways.
 You never said "I love you",
 And I always wondered why.
 I wanted to scream,
 I wanted to yell,
 Instead a few tears fell.
 You laughed at my feelings,
 God I wish I could laugh at them too.
 I can't say anything because there's nothing left to say;
 You walked out the door before I could tell you to stay.
 Maybe if I fell and hit my head a little too hard,
 Maybe one day you'll come to visit my grave.
 I wish I was enough to fit your perfect ways.
 You always remind me that I'm nothing,
 That I'm always too hard to be loved,
 As much as I try to be the best,
 You remind me that I'll fail.
 You would yell at my face until all I could hear was this empty void.
 You'd pick everyone over me because I'm not worth it at all.
 You taught me that men can't love me,
 That I'm too sensitive to be cared for,
 You'd hit my brother and tell him it was his fault,
 You wouldn't listen and you wouldn't love, you slam the door when you have had
 enough.
 You'll never dare mention the names of your children,
 Because we have all failed you madly,
 So I slit my wrists and your son turns to drugs,
 And then you tell everyone that you love us.
 You put on a mask,
 And people deeply believe that the mask is your true being,
 As for the rest of us we see past your mask and we see your rotten heart,
 For simply we weren't enough.
 I hope one day you look back and see that we made it through,
 Because I'm such a beautiful person and you'll fail to see,
 That my beauty is everywhere if you only wanted to know me.

Moving to Lesbos

By *Jaqi Hinkle* (poem category: *Experiences* – age: *15-17*)

"We need a new Amazonia" she says
 I laugh
 My suggestion is forcing all the men off of Lesbos
 And reclaiming our rightful land
 We will resurrect Sappho
 To lead us
 Neither of us know how to talk to girls
 But that's okay
 Because we will live on an island of lesbians
 With Ellen and Hayley Kiyoko to guide us
 I smile
 And then I cry later that night
 Because that conversation made me feel better
 But we only had it
 When she tried to cheer me up
 After a fifteen year old boy
 Told me
 An embryo should have just as much of a chance as me
 Me, a person
 He said it doesn't matter that he will never experience the terrors of
 pregnancy
 Because apparently
 His "opinion" is as valid as mine
 We were only trying to imagine a world without men
 So let's go find a necromancer
 We're going to bring back Sappho

Euphoric Oddities

By *Mx Kade* (poem category: *Experiences* – age: *18-21*)

"so, do you want to be a boy or a girl?"

you don't understand, Mom.

I want to break from the confines of my corporeal corpse and
transcend expectations of gender.
I want to be vaguely transparent and glow a hue of Tickle-Me-Pink™,
just to watch you squirm. I aim to be
shapeless and literally physically
melt in your fingers if you dare try to grab me.
I want to exist as orange jello always standing
slightly taller than you and my eyes
somewhere where my knees should be.
I will become the Kool-Aid™ man, crashing through brick
walls that congest my way in this quixotic
society of mandatory gender. I will hover
3mm off the ground and float down Dundas
to be met with screams of
"oh god what the fuck is that"
and I will love it.
Oh yeah.

do I have a complex? likely.

I've spent too long stewing in hatred for my body
to refuse to have fun in my 20's.
I will coat my body in tattoos and piercings
and clothes that don't fit me and
inject hormones weekly and I am
finally starting to love myself.

don't take that away from me.

Family

By *Emma Bishop* (poem category: *Experiences* – age: *18-21*)

With sweaty palms,
I stand in a room with a woman,
I think I know her,
I think we are the same,
I feel my blood pumping,
My nerves heightened.
She is beautiful,
With her short hair,
Suit and button up shirt.
I speak quietly,
In awe.
I am enamored immediately.
Here she is, a writer, a creator
In middle age,
With a gold band on her ring finger
And I think
That could be me one day.
I hold onto her name until I get home,
I find a photo of her and her wife,
A picture of her kid
And all of her history.
And I cry.

My body, a Temple

By *Tyler Johnson* (poem category: *Experiences* – age: *18-21*)

Words hit skin like stones
Chipping away the reality I know
The bitter taste of their words taints my tongue
I am forced to learn a lesson
It doesn't matter that I am young

My body is a temple, my soul is a blessing,
My heart is pure gold
These words preached to me by the book of old
If my body is a temple, it is one which has fallen into ruin
The blessing a curse
My identity my undoing

My body the ruin, my soul a curse
Gold faded, revealing stone
My truth a secret better left unknown
Unexplored, ignored, there is no one here
Damage is done, I am beyond repair
My foundation crumbles below me
I fall

Hands sort through the pieces of me
No intent, raw curiosity
Handled with care
Pillar by pillar
Piece by piece
I am repaired
I am seen

These Have Lips Too (I'm going to use them)

By *Olive Elzinga* (poem category: *Experiences* – age: *18-21*)

I have a story to tell.

About the things I have seen and the history I know.

I remember being so young I hardly knew I existed, being so insignificant that nobody my age saw it, or knew that I was a piece of the puzzle upon this body.

I remember growing up a little bit older each year, when I learned that not everybody resembled me, I can hear the lessons being taught about how there are two types of people.

I know better now.

That there is so much in between, but that I lay on one end of the spectrum - and it shows.

I remember feeling embarrassed for growing hair.

I remember being ashamed for letting a coat of red stain the world I am bound to.

I remember when I knew people would pay me less for my being present.

Just for my very being, this mound of flesh, private to the average person, I am deemed less than.

I remember not being taught properly how to use myself, how I would get lost within the possibilities of myths and legends of what lied within me.

I remember a jackhammer job with long, sharp nails forgotten to be clipped away. A terrifying event that forced me to shrivel and avoid any contact for months out of fear.

I don't blame the brain, it didn't know any better, how could it when nobody ever told it how.

I remember exploring.

I remember grinding into the music, moving with the hips in circles and a push and pull that teased the predators I chose to ignore as I ventured into the plains of my power.

I remember disoriented nights of men who parted my lips and took what they wanted, without hesitation about if I had any mutual feelings.

I remember hiding from darkness in strobe lights because I couldn't stay away from the nightlife, but I couldn't live in the darkness where they had found me most vulnerable.

But then I remember a woman, so soft, and daring. she kissed me after an hour of taking her time to memorize the constellations of patterns on my skin and I listened to the rhythm she had pounded into me of our breath coming in and out of one another until I didn't know where I started and she began.

I remember that I didn't need the disco balls blaring light to protect me from the dark when I had a sun of a woman in front of me, her rays so powerful that upon her touch I illuminated as though I was made up of a perpetual tangled mess of fairy lights. Where one by one they were a lit with her glow, before erupting into a blinding blaze.

I remember wishing I wasn't real, that I could transform into clay to be moulded into a stronger form, more worthy of respect and love and fortune I had long been robbed of (before a girl with blue hair taught me otherwise.)

This is my story.

And so long I've been silent, that I'm taking the space I deserve to tell it now.

After all vaginas can speak too.

Mirrors

By *Ash Barnard* (poem category: *Inspiration* – age: *15-17*)

They are one of the only recognized things to reflect back to you what you look like

We often look at the same mirror all our lives. Each of us see the person staring back differently

Some of us loathe it

Some are blinded by the fog that got placed in front of it

Some of us only see the attractive parts of the person in front of them

Some are covered in cob webs and dust

Most of us never look around to notice that there are many different mirrors in the world around us

So many of us are too focused on the reflective surface in front of us to even care to look at the other ones

When someone tries to show us a different mirror, we hiss

"That's not true!" We all scream in unison

"I don't deserve to be seen as beautiful!" some of us who loathe their image exclaim

"I have no flaws!" some of us who see perfection in their reflection whine

"I have no good qualities!" some of us who loathe our entire reflection sob

"You can't see the truth!" We all shout again, before going back to our lone mirrors

Some of us stay. We tilt our heads at the different reflections before us

"So this is what I look like to you," a small group of us declare

"How do I know which one is true?" We ask

The truth is, all of the mirrors are honest

They all highlight something different about you

But at the end of it all, we are still us

I am still me

You are still you

And we can all wipe away the fog on our mirrors, and occasionally look at other mirrors

And see ourselves in a new perspective in each of them

To learn some things we can improve,

And some things that we learn to
Admire

Tigress

By *Charlie Marie* (poem category: *Inspiration* – age: *15-17*)

Each and every woman out there is part wild animal and part dismayed little girl. Each of unique specimen and each tossed into the wilderness the exact same way, scared shitless and just trying to get by. We each have our own paths and obstacles but regardless of origin we share the same treacherous battle field that it is to be a woman in this life.

Everyone for themselves.

My mother, was a bear.

Moved from forest to foster home for longer than she could remember, but wouldn't let her circumstances swallow her potential. And so, she chose to grow into a solid, grounded, beautiful warrior rather than the beast everyone around her was bracing for. Not a fearless leader, but one who's instincts recognize when fear is crucial. Not the soldier who wins all the battles, but one who is sensible enough to know which wars are worth fighting.

She doesn't have to fight much anymore.

Now, she is a caring mama bear. Gentle and kind. Unless you mess with her kids. My mother loves nothing more than her children and would do anything for their wellbeing. she is wise. She remembers what it was to be finding your way through the detrimental peril of the wilderness, and rather than resenting the scars she braved along the way, she appreciates them because they allow her to try and prevent others from falling into the same traps she did.

Each and every woman out there is part wild animal and part biological anomaly. We scratch, claw and wrestle our way through the wicked ring masters whiplashes one at a time, refusing to jump through ONE MORE HOOP for a boy's club society. I once had a best friend who was a complete snake. She was known to suffocate others and constantly left the people around her gasping for freedom.

It's a fairly well known fact that snakes don't eat often. Typically, a snake will consume a meal once every week or two. Her seemingly flawless and slim figure was envy worthy and as if out of the garden of Eden to tempt me with the fruit of evil, it was *this* fucking snake who somehow convinced me that to look so slender and thin, eating once weekly was the swiftest highway to being *just like her* . But in eventually "besting" her at her own game, I failed to grasp that although snakes are striking, they are also scaly, feared, empty and alone.

And in turn,
That's what I became.

However, I have sympathy for the snake that taught me to fall in love with endless bones and constant emptiness. Deep inside, she was just a terrified caterpillar acting like a snake in attempt to survive while she waited for the next, better stage of her life to begin.

Each and every woman out there is a wild animal tamed by insecurity. You think girls are crazy?? You haven't seen anything yet. Forget crazy, ladies? Let's show them down right FERAL!

I've met bats, rats, bitches and weasels. I've loved battered seals and snails who live in pure panic of ever leaving their shells. I once witnessed a good and honest ferret steal, not because she wanted to, but because ferret means thief in pig Latin - or something? And she got so tired of running from her reputation that eventually,

She became it.

I have known she wolves who would howl out into the darkness and have others simply mock their cries. And so, they became lone wolves, not because they enjoy being alone, but because they were heartbroken by the consequences of trusting others enough to let them in.

Each and every woman out there is part wild animal and part GOD HERSELF!

The tide of survival is up to our necks and we are forced to push each other aside or under in an attempt to stay afloat if we don't know how to swim. Some of us... get lucky. We come into this world with wings or gills, talons or flippers. A single or multiple advantages handed to us at birth. Others, so desperate to fight the waves, will learn to swim as they go along. And the rest, will drown. There are beautiful creatures everywhere drowning and nothing can be done because rural, wild or urban, that's just life.

I used to be a kitten. Soft, fragile, innocent. Until I was tossed out into the wild. Then all at once, I was forced to grow up. So I covered my arms and hips with stripes. I painted myself red and I swore that the pain I caused myself would make me stronger or turn me into something divine.

But it never did.

Now I am a tigress. Not because I scarred myself with stripes but because I was never a kitten to begin with. I was a naked cub all along, already out in the wilderness. I just didn't know it yet.

Each and every woman out there is a wild animal. Is this what they meant by girls gone wild? Ha, we are girls gone wild but this isn't porn hub. In real life we are not just naked bodies waltzing in front of your eyes waiting for the taking. We girls are wild but this isn't

animal planet. We are more than just something incredible to look at. We are essential beings to this planet and demand to be put forth as more than a skeptical or a punch line.

Every single woman out there is a wild animal. So bear your teeth and talons, put those claws to good use, ruffle your feathers, tuck in your tail, let your mane fly free and get ready for a fucking fight. Because one by one we are breaking out of this man made cage.

Ready to bite the hand that beat us.

A Child's Need

By *Tyler Johnson* (poem category: *Inspiration* – age: *18-21*)

A child's need is met,
The answering calls are violence and pain.
Many asking what, out of this change, do I gain?

A need is met
Needs are constant and can't be ignored
That matters even when it's not yours.
Why is equality seen as a threat,
Why must these kids be the punching bag you use to vent?
Emotions are strong, emotions are strange
But emotions, even yours, often change
Emotions aren't permanent, people are.

But...

I get it.
You're uncomfortable and your feelings hurt,
But what about the kids whose needs you wish to ignore,
Those needs you wish to ignore solely because they're not yours.
You feel your rights are being taken away,
So you want to make sure that others will pay.
Because you're uncomfortable you want to ruin someone else's day.

These kids, they've already paid.
Their existence a tax that they must pay every day.
They've paid in blood, sweat, and tears,
They've paid by having to give up some of their childhood years.
Yet still you wish for them to give,
The blood, sweat, and tears
Nightmares at night, driven by realistic fears
You wish for that to be the life these kids live
Solely because you can't explain an uncomfortable situation to your kid.

An Eye for an Eye
A Tooth for a Tooth
A bathroom for a kid who wishes they were born
Just like you.

Bad Eggs and Ham

By *Jen B.* (poem category: *Inspiration* – age: *18-21*)

itty bitty piggies
march into markets
pigs washed in pink
but they're blue, and they flaunt it.
where are the pigs
for the lives that matter?
for toronto's village?
for drag balls' batters?
pigs have teeth
for the sake of a state
and its grip on the peoples
crushed by the weight
of histories drenched
in blood, blood, blood.
our families in the fight
still struggle in the flood.
why let pigs
run amok in our temples?
ancient desecration
in modern assembles.

am i a bad egg
cause i don't want pork
served silver spooned,
red knifed, rainbow forked?
this hog is rotting
lords of the flies
buzzing about
drowning out cries
of resistance, truth,
dignity, freedom.
pigs could invert
carrie's prom queendom;
piggies in crowns
and human-blood gowns
wave to the crowd
as they burn all around.

am i a bad egg
cause i don't want ham
shoved down our throats
like battering rams?
do you want applause
for hogs in drag wigs
like nothing's amiss?
as if there aren't pigs
on wet'suwet'en lands
mounting raids?
have you forgotten
why mounties were made?
have you forgotten
our siblings, sisters, brothers?
or the bricks thrown
by our gay foremothers?
when pigs kicked down
stonewall's door
our people rallied under:
'TAKE IT NO MORE!'
shout it out hoarse
until all are free
just like Sylvia
on christopher street '73,
for the people,
the people,
the people:

*"The people that are trying to do something
for all of us,
and not men and women
that belong to a white middle class club!
And that's what you all belong to!
Revolution now!
Gay... gay power.
Louder, gay power!"*

gay power,
gay power,
gays crumbled to powder.
gays on the streets,
gays locked in towers.

gays in the ground,
or spread about as ash;
we are still fighting,
the storm has not passed.

we *are* the riot,
we need no gear.
there is no pride
when innocents fear.
i've had my fill
of ham, ham, ham;
i utterly loathe it,
pride-i-am.
if we're bad eggs
then we'll bring the sulfur;
we won't stand idle
while others suffer.
we will not crack
for any egg poacher;
we're hungry for justice
and justice is kosher.

we are built to hold this world together
on our trembling shoulders
we are all meant to cry when we break
and nobody is built to snuff the flame
in another person's chest

Hell yes I'm a feminist

meaning all of us
are bleeding

I am a feminist for the girl dropping out of volleyball
because someone told her "you throw like a girl"
and she thought that was a bad thing

I am a feminist for every man with blood weeping from his arm
telling everyone "I'm okay. It's just a scratch"

I am a feminist for the woman giving up on her dreams
hanging up her carpenter gloves
tired of being told she will never be as good
as the men beside her

I am a feminist for every boy shivering in a dress
beneath his mother's angry eyes
while his sister skips past in her pants

I am a feminist for the woman told she was a boy from birth
who feels she has to wear a skirt to be seen as herself
by those who dare try
take her womanhood away from her

I am a feminist for the woman of colour carrying her rage and fear knotted
beneath her throat
knowing some "feminists"
will pull each other to their feet
pretending they don't see her lying beside them

I am a feminist for the Asian boy fighting down stereotype after stereotype
terrified of the day he finally breaks down
who will crutch his trembling shoulders?

I am a feminist for the person who is not a boy or a girl
who cannot see their face in any of society's mirrors

we list a river of forever
reasons to keep trying
to keep breathing this good air and stand up
holding each other above the heads of the patriarchy
so we can finally be heard

we are here to breathe hope into this aching world
we are water drops
alone we splatter, frightened, to the forest floor
together, we build the temple
of the river

let us go out and create a world
where the rivers we wash our feet of hope in
do not run with the blood of indigenous women
where we do not lose our boys to the believing
they will never be "man enough"
let us return to the river
promise

our legs
wheelchairs
crutches

whatever we use to carry ourselves into tomorrow
that they will be always be strong enough
for our journeys

broken as we are
together, we can mosaic a future

let us stand by our sisters
and realize the riverbed
is a candle
lit for our burning mouths

This is an Intermission

By *Mx Kade* (poem category: *Inspiration*— age: *18-21*)

this is the in between, the lawless
middle ground. this is heavy rain
melting snow and flooding the streets.

this is peace and
conflict cohabiting on the same plane,
where water is fire depending on
how one blinks.

this is the silence of religion,
a space where life and death instead
never existed.

here, there is no search for a God
that abandoned us, and He will
not come looking for us. the shock of it
wears off after an infinity has passed.

it snows when it is sunny
here, and hail will pass through your
body leaving bruises that don't hurt.
this is nothing existing parallel to everything,
where smog fills your veins and

replaces what keeps you alive. you are not
alive nor dead, instead a smoking husk on a
grey cloud.

but this is just an intermission, this is safety
and this will not hurt you.

this will not hurt you.

trust me.

Our Love is Dangerous

By *Ava Webb* (poem category: *Love* – age: *13-14*)

Our love is dangerous
It's not just you and me
We don't fit in their box
So we'll never be free

Their taunting words tantalizing
Tainting our tongues with their speech
Until we taste blood
Drawn by their poison

That guy just called me a dyke
But do you know why?
Because that son of a bitch couldn't get it up for his twenty year old girlfriend if he took six fucking viagras.

But hey
At least our identity
Is no longer considered a mental illness

I want to feel safe
In both parts of my sexuality
I shouldn't be afraid to feel
Because it's scary enough all on it's own

Not to mention that I'm too gay for the straights
And too straight for the gays

And just to be clear
Bisexual does not mean I'm half gay half straight

HOWEVER It DOES MEAN
That I am consistently awkward
Constantly uncomfortable
And always ALWAYS a flamboyant mess

Even though they don't lock us up anymore
We're still fitted with straight jackets
The moment we're born
Praying that they're worn down with time

Our limbs only to hug ourselves
But we still don't love ourselves
We will forever crave embrace
Always to be disappointed

We slouch through it all
Lurking in the shadows
Afraid to show our light
For fear that we shine too bright

Though we know light can be a beacon
Calling out to lost souls
Commanding inclusion
That light can be a haven

But we are hidden away
Hunched under the thumb of oppression
We are chained and bound to
What others think we should be

Not who we are
Not who we love
But who they want to see

When I march down mainstreet in july
Painted pink purple and blue
It's because I'm bored of my white straight jacket

Tired of being seen as
Straight quiet polite
When i'm gay loud and obtuse
And i will not stop just because you don't like me.

Toxic

By *Reah Dheenshaw* (poem category: *Love* – age: *13-14*)

He told me he loved me with all his heart,
 But still decided to tear it apart.
 He told me I was beautiful when I thought wrong,
 He would reassure me to make sure he wasn't wrong,
 To make sure I was the puppet and he was the master,
 Fixing me than tearing me apart to make sure I forgot her,
 Forgot the girl who I used to be
 So he could replace me with someone I didn't want to be.

I didn't see what he did until the very end
 When I was broken down and too tired to attend,
 Attend to my friends and family.

Trying to get out of my room caused me fear,
 Being left alone started to become more clear,
 Where I didn't have to worry about me,
 So people couldn't see the monster he turned me to be.
 See, it was always my fault
 I started to believe.
 The more I cut I finally felt free.
 The more he yelled the more I cried.
 The more I cried the more he smiled.
 The more he told me his lies,
 The more I wanted to hear.
 The abuse started to become simple and clear.
 The yelling and crying and the lies he told
 Started to become something in our day-to-day conversation.

The more I got used to it,
 It shaped my thought,
 That maybe love was supposed to be this way,
 Because the words rolled off his tongue in a soothing way.
 It became so simple for him to tell me my faults.
 I got so caught up in who he wanted me to be,
 I totally lost sight of the girl I needed to be.
 I pulled everyone away so he could love me,
 For it was wrong if I told anybody.
 I had to keep quiet so people wouldn't look at him wrong,
 So they don't see the rotten hole in his corrupted heart.
 But I was not blind,
 I saw it right through his perfect mask.
 I saw how evil he was,
 And I wanted to dance,
 He wasn't the person I thought he was to be,
 He turned into someone I despise, but

I still loved him because he was good once,
And I believed he could be again
If he gave it a chance.
But instead he took me for granted,
But I still held a little hope,
For maybe one day he'll return.
I wish the best for him,
For I know he holds the power, and
It's only him who can activate it.

I hope he knows I believe in him,
And every day I wish he's doing well,
For I once saw the good in the devil,
And I saw the good in him as well.
He hurt me and shattered me in millions of pieces,
But if that takes him to the path he has to follow,
I wish him well.
For he was more than I could ask,
He brought me tears and little laughs.
It was a twisted love,
But I wouldn't change a thing,
For he was someone I loved and held close,
And he saw something in me.
He made me lose myself to rebuild,
And this time it wasn't love for him,
It was love for myself.

He will always hold a piece of me,
But daydreaming and rethinking what we could be
became suffering.
He's happy with someone else,
And that stung at first,
But I hope then he can give him the things I Couldn't.
I gave him all I could,
But my love ran dry,
when I couldn't find love for myself.

We were tragic and a little crazy,
For he was really the devil who was stuck with me,
So he played mind tricks to trick me,
And his beauty blinded me.
I was blind and handed him my broken heart,
He fixed it,
And Sewed it back together,
Just so he could crumble it up again.

I knew he would hurt me,
But his smile was one thing that made me crazy,
For he is someone I miss, but
will never communicate with again.
Now I see what he had done and I wish him the best.

Many people think it's ugly for the way he scarred me,
And I hope some choose to still love me,
Because no one's beautiful without a few imperfections.
His imperfections were something I was willing to risk,
He was a chapter not a life sentence.

For my sweetest Alex,
I'll always hope you will activate that switch,
I wish so much for you,
Because there's so much more to you than what I have seen.
I hope you find who you're supposed to be,
I hope you find the beautiful things I see,
And I hope you know the hardest part was to let you go.
May you please find the someone that I couldn't be.
I gave you the world
But you wanted the entire galaxy.

Bach & Breeze

By Aaron Smail (poem category: Love – age: 15-17)

A welcome breeze on a hot day,
The sun piercing through me
Fading shadows and endless light
Guide me, lead me, and pull me
In-between my destinations
I think most of you
Winding and mingling with notes of Bach
Open-collard shirts, and instant photographs
Moments captured and held onto
For colder days

little brother

By *Kai Sjerven* (poem category: *Love* – age: *15-17*)

look at him go he's
soaring and laughing as the dog laps at his heels
field is too small for *my* little brother

look at him cry hes got
a cut above his eye
pavement too harsh on his face

look at my brother hes flying and
his hands are letting go of the swing
my mouth drops open no sound comes out

look at my brother hes coughing and his eyes are wide
car burns and crackles men cry out as it explodes in a burst of gasoline and
smoke
dad sits on the sidewalk
they look defeated in the 5 am dark
man, they loved that car

listen to my brother now
he howls in punjabi at his friends through the screen
headset on, so loud, so serene

look at my brother all grown up
elementary school graduation and it
reminds me of years ago
i see my friends recycled tears in his classmates eyes
feels like his goodbyes are mine

look at me as i wake up crying
every nightmare ends with him bleeding on the floor
dont tell him that

shout at him in swedish and smack him upside the head for
taking my chocolate

hide my face too often
try to convince myself
hes annoying, im not proud

sit with him in the therapists office
just tell me anything, i say
tell me about highschool whats going on in your life

i want to ask why are you so quiet now little brother what changed

less secrets now more distance
no more fireworks on halloween together or friday night movies

i know thats because of me so why
do i feel so hurt when he turns around and
walks up the stairs

tell me anything, little brother, the silence is deafening.

Our Song

By *Aaron Smail* (poem category: *Love* – age: *15-17*)

Your laughter is but a song
Your smile but a melody
Your hands are but keys to pluck
Oh, the way you look at me

Your mind's but a symphony
Your kiss a gentle cadence
Your heart but a quiet tone
An aria of fragrance

I will be singing your song
And you will be singing mine
Loud, proud, melodic, and strong
Two voices
A single line

Your laughter is but a song
Your smile but a melody
I hope our songs will become one
And we sing for eternity

Palindrome Girl

By *Ash Barnard* (poem category: *Love* – age: *15-17*)

I remember you

Just like I promised to you, what feels like lifetimes ago, when you would have qualified as "the one that got away", but you were, and most likely still are, so much more than that title. You were the light that shined upon me during my darkest times. You remain one of the few fond, warm, soft parts of my memory in that hell hole of a childhood. You gave me the best example of what a really good relationship feels like, how refreshing and respectful it's supposed to be. And we were only just six years old. I will never ever forget you. I remember every last one of my favorite details of you.

You, the one who refused to cut her long blonde hair because I was trying to grow out mine and you wanted to do it with me. You, who watched the little mermaid and the lion king religiously. You, who would pounce on me and we'd wrestle like lion cubs of a pride until we dropped dead from exhaustion.

Yeah, it was obvious that we both had little girl crushes on each other. The sweetest, gayest six and five year old partnership, in our own innocent world. I was constantly jealous of all your other friends, you were a charismatic extrovert, after all. I constantly tried to steal your attention when they were around, to the point where I pretended I was sick at your sixth birthday party. Wasn't my highest point, I'll admit. But it was clear, you loved me, so much.

But it couldn't stay that way, could it? It all came to a hard stop when you moved away. You packed your dented, golden heart and left all of us, the people you touched and glued together, on our knees. Of course, you didn't mean to. Life happens, things change, long-distance doesn't always work out. You had to move on from your old life to make room for the new one.

It was still, an extremely hard hit.

We promised the day you packed up all your things from school that we would never forget each other. I kept that promise, and I'm sure I will for the rest of my life. I sometimes wonder if you did too. It's okay if you didn't, I understand.

But you will always be a memory that I treasure, a valuable experience I am grateful to claim to have received. And I thank you profusely for giving me that long year of sunshine, that I needed so badly, when things got dark.

Patience

By *Ly Beaton* (poem category: *Love* – age: *15-17*)

I'll apologize for no reason
As if I've committed an act of treason
Maybe some sort of fraud
Something like I pissed off God
But I need you to be patient with me

I hope you know how deeply I care
And I don't know what I'd do without you there
Your poems and drawings fill me with joy
You've brought so much love to this blue-haired boy
I know that you are patient with me

I know love is a fantasy pulled right from a book
But my stone cold heart you unexpectedly took
Now miss you with every second that passes
Your kisses, your smile, and those cute little glasses
I'm happy you're patient with me

So we may have acted like we're at war
But if at the end of the day I can knock on your door
I'll call us winners in this pointless fight
Since I won't let you drown or blowout your candlelight
Thank you for being patient with me

Untitled

By *Aria Stewart* (poem category: *Love* – age: *15-17*)

How dare you tell me
That I'm unnatural
When my only crime is being a girl who loves girls

How dare you tell me
That I'm wrong, or bad
When you shame others for who they are

How dare you tell me
That your God doesn't approve
Because after all, they were the one who made girls so
stunning

How dare you tell me
I can't be in love
With her
Because have you seen the way the sun shines off her hair, how
it glitters in her eyes?
Have you seen her in the morning, bleary and barely-awake?
Have you seen the way her hand fits so perfectly in mine
Or how her lips melt into mine

How dare you tell me
We can't be together
When you don't see the way we march proudly
Underneath the same rainbow flag

How dare you look at us
With the same disdain and disgust you would
At a piece of gum under your shoe
Or the public restroom at a gas station

How dare you tell me
Bisexuality isn't real
This is just a phase
When you barely know me

How dare you shame me
How dare you?

Dance of the Bat People

By *Taryn Muldoon* (poem category: *Love* – age: *18-21*)

When a bat falls from the sky
when it is torn from the arteries of the night
it is a sheaf of darkness flayed from the smooth muscles of time
caught like a curled leaf

nobody expects to find a bat on the ground
in daytime
nobody expects to find capillaries of the sky
spurting on their doorstep

you can read a human's heart
not by what they choose to kill
but by who they do not let die

*we gathered them
limp bodies ripped loose from darkness
squeaking their outrage at the dawn*

*ready to heal with open chests
and all the blood in our fingers*

ready to give everything

nobody expects to find a lover
when they were looking for a bat
when they scan the ground for curled leaves of forgotten night
they forget how soft the hands of light are

the gifts time can give
in the struggle for life between death

*nobody notices
when two girls fall in love
as nobody sees
the bat tumbling from the sky*

as they fall, remember with each sucking breath
those pups tucked into their chests
how many hours it takes in the lonely night
to convince torn babies soft hands and
a paintbrush
can stop this feeble wail against the lonely dawn

nobody thinks
of how lost a heart gets
searching for the night
aching with dark and the rasp of tiny lungs
fingers burying bodies of soft skin and quiet wing

beneath soil heavy with the pull of departed lives
or else standing alone as they lift away
solitary stars rising into the sky

nobody remembers the way it feels
the first time you hold her
she is the sky above you and your wings are wide
aching to rise into the smoke and silver
of her hair

the first day the bat eats a mealworm
self-important
shivering jaw and wings like twigs
 almost strong

you cry
from joy or sorrow
as you imagine darkness
stitched together
reunited with the sky

her hands move over your back
her mouth on yours
you curl your fingers together
feel time unwrapping itself from your shoulders
she is laughter and wrists and gentle breath
for the first time
you look up from the bats, see her face
and forget to breathe

*you love her
open chest
and fingers filled with beating blood*

ready to give everything

fly into her arms
hesitantly
desperately
raise your hands and realize
you were born for this life

born for this gushing breath
this pulse like a wild wind
laughter bubbling up from the veins

*they rejoined the dance of night
moon echoing over their heads
new
as the mornings they stole from the neck of death*

*you danced with her
cresting into her sky
wings beating boldly
Name it.*

*name it love
a capillary of the night
woven into her chest*

you rise
flickering into dusty sky
darkness knitting
pulses winking
like stars

Gloriously Indecent

By *Olive Elzinga* (poem category: *Love* – age: *18-21*)

We are normal.

We are the the princes prancing,

With velvet purple tails and green carnations pinned to our hearts.

gifting violets, and glances in place of words.

We are the living, the artists, the inventors, the poets, the scholars, we are the highly regarded while the sun is up and the lights are off.

Flip the switch.

Listen to the rumors.

Wait for dark and we become their gutter rats,

Their freak show to stare at,

And at night they find us disgustingly intriguing,

But by day we are forgotten, misplaced, shoved away into shadowed alleys, tucked away unless it's play time for them to enjoy us as they please,

And we become those labelled as grossly indecent.

So, we are the scoundrels, the dirty, the angels fallen from grace into the graves they had us dig for ourselves, but we still never lost our feel for a dance.

We are the ones punished and left for dead.

And though some have perished, we have left behind a legacy that means we can never die out.

Through the sewers they pushed us under we will crawl, we will weave, until fingers stop pointing us out,

And they start snapping in support,

We listened to the jeers they forced down our throats as they labeled us queens as an insult,

But we took their words and built paper crowns out of it, wearing the jewels on the heads of diamonds in the rough.

Now we listen to the cheers until the protests are drowned out.

And as we go past surviving,

Look at my crown,

And try to dethrone me.

I dare you.

Brother of Icarus

By *Jaqi Hinkle* (poem category: *Metaphorical* – age: *15-17*)

Daedalus had a second son
Icarus had a brother

And when one boy flew too high towards the sun
Too close to the waves flew the other

Were they not afraid to die?
Was the warning not heard over Iapetus and Icarus's laughter?

Make sure to be careful of where you fly,
They were cautioned so many times by their father

For the heat of the sun could melt the wax
Or the sea spray would dampen the feathers

But once those wings were on their backs
Both forgot their mortal tethers

Daedalus kept an eye on Icarus, who was known to be brash
For his younger son he worried not

In a tragedy, it would be his eldest going down in a crash
Iapetus had more caution, more thought

When Icarus caught sight of sun and flew to reach for Apollo
His brother kept low out of fear

Their father thought it was Icarus he must follow
And distracted Iapetus saw how beautiful the sea could appear

He got a little closer
And saw Poseidon down below

Trying to get another glimpse of the ocean's composer
All warnings did he forgo

When Iapetus realized the breaking waves had caused
His feathers to start to wilt

The cries of terror made the Sea King pause
Replacing his grin with guilt

The flying boy did his best to get away from the waters
But wet feathers weighed him down

He was pulled into the depths by Poseidon's daughters
Same as his brother, he drowned

His father had been there, racing to catch
The son that fell from the heavens

But no one had been there as feathers detached
To save Iapetus or give comfort in his final seconds

Having lived a life in grandeur
Icarus died in a blaze of glory

Iapetus wasn't a doer
And few remember his story

The Forest Absorbs You

By *Ripley Stevens* (poem category: *Metaphorical* – age: *15-17*)

The forest absorbs you
The moss crawls over your skin
Tree roots intertwine with you fingers
Holding you close
The wild flowers cover your scars
You are home
You are home
You are finally home

Sugar Rush

By *Emma Bishop* (poem category: *Metaphorical* – age: *18-21*)

Eating a plum,
under the summer sun,
fingernails scratch squeaky skin,
releasing a flood of sweet pulp & juice,
painting my face,
my arms, my hands
stained by sugar
put my dirty shirt in the laundry
and it glows pink,
a sunset illuminates the fabric,
the tart aroma
of my plum,
my sweet, sweet dream.

Summer is a standstill,
the world whispering
you've done enough,
you can relax.
so I shake the cherry tree,
watch red bombs fail to hang on.
one by one,
they fall into my palms.

I ascend into the cradle of branches,
suck their pink flesh,
and spit pits on the lawn.

Mango tree,
laden with fruit.
leaves brush my hand
with delicate fingers,
sheltering treasure.
When they mature into golden yellow hues,
capsules of sunlight,
I will pick them,
and drown myself in the sticky balm
I'll get every last bit off their husky pits
but I won't be able to pick them all in time
so I'll sit and watch
as they fall to the ground and rot.