

ISSUE #3

OUTWRITE EZINE



CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

TYLER JOHNSON • JAQI HINKLE • OLIVE ELZINGA • JAZZY DEFEHR
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OutWrite Issue 3 – August 2020

This year's OutWrite eZine has collected many poetry submissions from LGBT+ youth 13-21. As the third 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 - Editor
Victoria Pride Society Youth Leadership Council

This is our third annual OutWrite Publication and we are honored to showcase the talents of these poets and share the creative, personal and authentic work they have put forth for this publication.

OutWrite is more important than ever. Considering the pandemic, we are going through and the limitation of seeing each other face to face to express ourselves with each other. This collection of poems is an assortment of themes, lived experiences and metaphorical experiences. We encourage you, the reader to share a copy of this with your families, schools, and organizations to enjoy.

This all ages publication sparks inspiration, conviction and pulls at the heart strings and challenges us to be more inclusive, to love unconditionally and to grow into the best version of ourselves.

Thank you to all who submitted this year. We hope to see you again next year.

Nick Luney
VPS Youth Initiatives Committee Chair

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A Rebels Cry

By TYLER JOHNSON - @Future.Werewolf (age: 18-21)

Your church is a gravesite,
The chapel built from bones
That holy wine you drink poured from the skull of a child who embraced their sin
Your scripture the whip that cuts deep into unmarked skin
Blood dripping from the words of your holy men as they talk of our 'fate'
Flesh ripped from bone
Our souls laid barren and bruised
On the front steps of sacrilege

Our history is written in blood
Our pride, remembrance of the fallen and what we fought to gain
A gentle hand held out to those in need
A loving kiss in a sea of hate
The silent embrace of two sinners
Bodies marked with the violence of a saint

Our existence an act of rebellion

...

Our existence an act of rebellion

A cry for help from a tainted soul
that only You can save

"Hate the sin love the sinner"
You can't hate the sin
yet love the sinner
When our sin is simply existing

The adversaries influence upon this earth
A secret love, a hidden kiss
The forbidden fruit sweet on our lips

Just one little bite couldn't hurt

Not when that bite comes from someone who looks like Her

Not when it comes from someone whose eyes shine like stars
And whose hands gently hold the weight of
my
heavy
sinning
heart

A Woman I Could Love

By *JAQI HINKLE - @jaqi_art (age: 15-17)*

I think I am kinder to myself because I can imagine myself as a woman I could love

if I saw a girl with this body, I could never be disgusted

by the red skin, thin arms, or baby fat

I would be drawn in

by seastorm eyes, soft hands, flowing hair

I would be distracted

by the shadow under my clavicle, the curve of my bare waist, the muscles flexing in my calves

I know a beautiful woman when I see one

Watching the girls around me, I ponder what they see in the mirror

Does she hate those thick eyebrows

that could matter less when she scrunches them up in thoughtless, musical laughter?

Are the thick thighs her biggest insecurity

even though when I see them I just wish I could rest my head in her lap and dream the day away?

Is there a girl out there who tries to hide her tiny chest

but sees mine and realizes if she thinks I'm beautiful

maybe someone could feel the same about her?

I hope so

My mirror shows me everything a woman could choose to love

Everything that I can choose to love

An Abundance Of Citrus

By OLIVE ELZINGA - @oliveor_twist (age: 18-21)

Your first attempt at breaking a bite into my flesh,
left you with only slivers of pith,
no juice.
Just bitter tongue teasing taste.

I asked for a rain check.
I didn't want your going from tangerine to mandarin,
I didn't want to be your backup shopping list stop.
"So stop" I whispered.

Was that for you or me?
You told me my breasts were bigger than average,
their gravity filled my hands,
Hardly small melons, more pomelos.
Your favourite fruit.

How about that rain check?
Slice them up and serve them on a platter,
Have me as a frantic fanatic feast.
But another tangerine was in your fruit bowl.

I made lemonade.
The juice spit in my eyes,
And I sliced through my rind in the watery haze.

Fed up I bought a grapefruit
A big fancy kind of grapefruit
Wrapped in that soft foam fishnets grapefruit
Tangled in satin, or was it lace?
I unwrapped it.
Slowly split it silently in half.

I dived in,
Fingers going to the middle and hooking around each slice,
Pulling them towards my mouth,

Tearing, devouring, Sucking on segments,
Lips smacking together to get the job done.
An assault of juice bruised my ego.
This was not my favourite fruit.

I finished it in the black of my bedroom anyway.
Throwing the peel into the hall trash can.
How about that rain check?

Umbrellas shade us from drizzles,
barely needed but they cover our eyes.
It's not fair to the roots I have grown,
To let you use my sour for nothing more than a spritz,

But beneath the grey sky my tree is tangled in your grove,
And beneath your umbrella,
Sunset skies blossom,
And there lies the sweetest orange I've ever seen.

And I'll never get to taste it.

Black Hole

By JAZZY DEFEHR - @snazzy.jazzy7 (age: 15-17)

A wave crashing onto the shore
My emotions want to fly and soar
But no
I don't want that
Because if they come to the shore and fly freely
Than people will run and hide
And I would have to deal with moving forward
When I have barely understood what's going on
Lost in this cloud of confusion
With no silver lining in sight
I feel as if I am empty inside
With no words of kindness
Who am I
This blackhole in my chest
Sucking all the happiness out of my life
And all I am left with is numbness and sorrow
This blanket of grief consumes me
With no heart and only anger
Hoping I will sit here and take it
And yet I rise
From the ashes
Like a phoenix
I will not willingly die
I will continue to survive
In the hopes of a better tomorrow

Candy Man

By N.O.CON - @n.o.con (age: 15-17)

He told me he was like a kid in a candy store
Overjoyed
By all of the sweet things life offered him
upon a silver platter.

Greedy, sticky hands
grabbing hold of every vice—
mortality would allow.

A cherry stained sink,
cocoa powder veins
and rotting teeth.

Little did I know
I was
just another sugar coating
to indulge in.

Just another treat
to feed the growing cavity inside of him.
But I wasn't sweet enough
to satisfy his cravings.

His icing sugar blow
and pixie stick packaged crank
drew out
and enunciated the hills and valleys
of his rib cage.

He loved it so god damn much
he may as well have been a diabetic.

His treats
were coaxing him to his grave
When thought washed over him
he only found it refreshing.

He could feel death
nipping at his heels —
and would only slow down to greet it.
Waiting patiently,
for it to claim him
with hungry hands like his own.

He knew his limits.
He paid them no mind.
he would cross any line
for one more line,
An eye for an eye.

The spectrum of his cotton candy lips
soared
from bubble gum pink,
to a haunting pale blue.

His lemon drop skin
like caution tape
that couldn't seem to keep me away
Though
I wish I headed the warnings
rather than bleach every blood stained red flag
that would flutter into my lap.

I mistook the crime scene
for a safe house
and continue to pay for it.

As the candy shop boy
grew into a man
He lost his humanity,—
His soul still wanders the empty halls of my chest.

I can tell myself
he is only a myth
A phantom of my past

The monster under my bed—
or in my closet
But my candy man always finds his way back to me.

A stowaway
on my train of thought.

I'll find myself
writing him back into existence,
A ghost
I continue to resurrect
Regardless of how painful
the séance may be.

His presence
taunts me.
And I am petrified
of what it may want from me.

And I am reminded,
that it was when he took my hand
and lovingly guided me
Into his shop of horrors
I discovered a sweet tooth
I never knew I had.

I too fell for the sinister whisper
Convinced thin white lines
are as sweet as sugar.

So as much as I once loved
what's left of this haunted candy store
I have no choice
but to burn it to the ground
and watch teary-eyed as the flames roar

Because I can't let the candy mans phantom

haunt me anymore.

Damsel In Distress

By JAZZY DEFEHR - @snazzy.jazzy7 (age: 15-17)

I always wanted to be a Disney princess
And yet I feel more like a damsel in distress
Saving myself from monsters and villains has become a
daily job
One that I want to retire from
I'm tired of rescuing myself
I'm tired of fighting all the battles and feeling helpless
When is it my turn to be saved
When is it my turn to be swooped up and taken care of
Trying to solve problems, when I just want to cry
Retire to a never ending lullaby
But I will not stop fighting for myself
I will not stop fighting for the people I love
Because that is what I deserve
I deserve to feel safe and happy
I will never stop fighting for my happiness
And every day when a new monster comes
I will continue to fight
By the end of the story
She is no longer a damsel in distress
But a heroic princess

Decora Clown

By KIERRAH BABCOCK - @I.am.the.nothing (age: 15-17)



Heart Apartment

By *OLIVE ELZINGA - @oliveor_twist (age: 18-21)*

In my head exists an apartment I built for us.
A big corner apartment, with yellow walls in the living room,
They reflect back the beam of your smile at all times of day,
and large windows framed in brick,
that pokes out between a collage of what few things I've seen on our separate walls,
stitched together with lyrics of songs we both like.
There are two bedrooms
one for us to sleep,
and one for our hobbies:
makeup tables, art easels, and the Mary Poppins Bag of closets;
Always a never ending reach of tulle and patterns that the 80s is still leaving voice
messages for
us to return.
There's window seats along the main room with enough storage underneath to
house all our
books, binders, and odd ball trinkets.
And this is our apartment.
Where we dance around for no one but us.
Where I would bake you pies at midnight.
Where poems read aloud become our background soundtrack.
This is the apartment I built for us.
But I think it's time to pack it away.
Instead of dragging you along in my cycle of yearning for memories that haven't
been birthed
between us,
Just my own imagination.
So I'm unhangng our succulents by the windows because I'd kill everything else,
I'm painting over the pieces of your face in the photographs that will never be taken
of us,
I am unmoulding the shape of you pressed into my bed,
Lifting out the stains of our lipstick mixed onto each other's skin.
Sweeping away the soft whispers of things I can only really blame hearing on the
wind.
And I have to wonder if dreams count as memories,
Because those were the best times I've spent with you,
But
It's time for you to move out of my head, give me back the space I leased.

my heart's rent is still being paid,
And I don't think it would be right to evict you from there quite yet.
I don't think I can let this apartment go completely.
I will live in it just for me,
But that doesn't mean you can't live across the hall.

I Can't Breathe

By OWG (age: 18-21)

I can't breathe.

I read the news. Tears like broken pearls turn the words to watery, bloody, battered smears. Black on white, white on black. It's all the same. Or at least, it *should* be.

I can't breathe.

George Floyd. Breonna Taylor. Ahmaud Arbery. Tony McDade. Freddie Gray. Regis Korchinski-Paquet. Names that carry stories so rich, they were eaten by the hungry. The wrong kind of hunger. Names screamed by protestors dressed in black, throats hoarse from gas and crying. Crying out to any god who may give a damn.

I can't breathe.

How many throats need to be closed in violent scenes?
How many mouths need to open in unheard screams?
How many guns need to be pulled, when a wallet's all you need?
How many people need to die at the hand of hate and greed?

I can't breathe.

Running. Shopping. Bird-watching. Sleeping. Driving. Playing video games. Complying. Some call it living life. Some call it their cause of death.

I can't *fucking* breathe.

Rubber bullets should hit the ground before their target, yet targets hit the ground before the bullets. It is no wonder people are angry. They are being shot with bullets, metal bullets the size of cats, with the thinnest rubber fur.

I still can't fucking breathe.

Riots. Riots. Riots. A trans black woman started a riot. Stonewall. There is no queer liberation without black lives. Today, we celebrate Pride, but it is no parade. It is a riot. We riot for the black lives that matter, the ones then and the ones now. Riot. Riot. Riot. Complacency never made history.

I can't breathe.

I write in neat Arial, I type in satisfying taps. But every keyboard click is a gunshot going off through the head of an innocent soul's body. My hands shake, my shoulders shake. My throat hurts. Everything hurts.

I can't breathe.

But they won't kill me. This isn't about me. It's about the man who can't breathe, and now he never will. It's about the protestors who can't breathe when cops throw tear gas and expect not *peace*, but *complacency*. This poem is falling apart and running in all different directions, but frankly, I don't care. It's appropriate, when the world is falling apart and Black folks are falling apart and families are falling apart and lives are-

I can't breathe.

Lungs were meant to be full of air, but instead they are empty, or full of gas, or fear, or pain, or sorrow, or anger. Anger so bright, burning cars flicker and fail in comparison.

I can't breathe.

I can't breathe, I can't breathe, I can't breathe. The air is thick with toxins both physical and verbal. The words have been repeated through time, in so many contexts, wrapping our history books in cloaks of blood and broken pieces of record discs, replaying the same line over and over. I can't breathe. I can't breathe, I can't breathe.

The president rationalizes the loss of property as permission to take lives. You can rebuild things. You cannot rebuild people. But it is a sick echo of slave owners, equating life to property. Have we not learned anything in three *hundred* fucking years?

I can't breathe.

I feel as though the world is dying inside me. I want to get out there, to be protesting, to be yelling myself hoarse with the names of people who must not be forgotten. I want to light something on fire, just to feel like I'm adding light to the world. I want to see a revolution. Hell, I want to be part of the revolution. I want to see people get mad enough that their anger rips the very fabric of society and weaves a new story into existence. I want to hold those responsible so close to the flame that the sweat on their brow from the heat cannot be differentiated from the sweat of knowing they are being forced to look at all the blood on their hands. I want them to see the passion burning in my eyes.

I can't breathe.

I feel smothered. By smoke, by tears, by gas, by rubber, by leather, by skin, by metal.

I can't breathe.

REFLECTIONS

By *MONROE MAXWELL* (age: 13-14)

The first time I met myself was at a playground
 Staring off in the direction of the other children I knew it wasn't them I
 had come to see
 It was me
 Watching them run and play as I observed with curious eyes and a tightly
 closed mouth I just
 knew I was the only one
 The only one who thought exactly the way I did
 The only one who looked exactly the way I did
 The only one who stared as far as the eye could see and saw exactly what I
 saw
 The second time I met myself was in a mirror
 Staring back at me was someone I had known all my life but could never
 quite wrap my head
 around
 Pondering my own lost eyes
 Picking out my own likes and insecurities
 Standing at the border between self love and self hate
 The third day I met myself was in you
 Your bright eyes and your Mona Lisa smile
 The way your hair blew back behind you when the wind picked up
 The way you can never quite look directly at me
 Knowing you makes me believe that I could never hate myself because
 hating myself would be
 hating a part of you

River

By *MONROE MAXWELL* (age: 13-14)



River Phoenix as Mike from My Own Private Idaho

Shakey Lover

By **BRENDAN LINDSAY** (age: 15-17)

I am so scared of love.

It is a starved beast, an unquenchable yearning, it fills every nook and cranny of my body and anchors me down.

It begs so much of me and promises nothing in return.

It eats away and leaves me with only these splattered words and hungry bones.

I am a rocking, rickety rowboat

Beached and battered, already starting to rot with jaded hopelessness

I've been thrown to the shore time and again by a series of tempests

Serious, deadly storms, all these hurricanes have names

This love is like the distant horizon, an escape from this coarse sand isolation

The frothing clouds a radiant heaven with you

I'm not sure if I'll make it tho

I get stomach aches when I'm nervous

I shiver when I'm anxious

I am constantly scared of everything

And then you'll touch me and my tensed shoulders crash down from the ceiling

When you squeeze me tight it's the only time I can breathe, my lungs restart and inhale the mist around you

I dissolve in your arms like salt, in the oceans rolling embrace

When I tell you about the roaring pain inside of me

About the old waves that crash against my heart

I am not trying to scare you, I'm numb to the saline stinging these wounds, this tumultuous

tumbling feels normal. I just tell you cause I feel the waves quieting. I speak your name and the storm begins to end

You help me work apart these bloated knots of rope

Swollen with the heavy water of past pain

A tangled heart, slowly eased apart by gentle hands. Finally at ease.

Is it possible to catastrophize positively? Am I blowing my heart up over proportionally small feelings? Are these words bursting forth just a script already written by my lonely mind? It's hard to tell, for you are the perfect actor, fitting the bill exactly and filling this body like a generous meal. You fit so perfectly against me I don't know if it matters.

I want to sink deeply in love with you but my heart is too scared of drowning again

This whirlpool circling my head tries to suffocate happiness

But when I gasp for air the lonely wind rips at my face, and I know I need you

I used to panic constantly about when and where and how I'd ever see my
lighthouse lover, scanning in the distance of his shadow, his rare light. Shivering
at the shipwrecked ghost of his love.

Now you swaddle me, pressurize my lungs. Even when I'm cold and shivering I
still feel you near, in the air all around me like mist
Now you flow through my mind easy and soft, like gentle hands over shoulders,
like loving words between sheets

You hug me like the ocean
You embrace me like the rolling waves rocking its baby to sleep
When the waves of panic wash over me, your arms are there, absorbing the force
that normally wears down my hope.

Forgive me when my hands shake holding yours, you know I am always cold and
nervous
Forgive me when I stare at your lips and say nothing, I'm trying to form mine into
a concealed "I love you"
Forgive me when I grab onto you so desperately, I am just trying to make sure
you're really there

Love is a starved beast that can maul and consume, I was scared of it but You are
worth the risk of being devoured
I step back into the amphitheatre, ready for another dance with the force that
can cripple
Thank you for sticking around for this scarce meal, all gristle and scar tissue. I do
not know how you can savour this meal, but thank you for finding me palatable

Thank you So Much

This beast is worth dancing with,
These waves are worth bearing
I am prepared to drown again
So, I calm these shaky nerves,
I walk deeper into the water
I follow the current
And I open my lungs to call out my gratitude
Thank you for being there

-

With dedication and hope, your shaky rowboat lover

Something So Small

By *MONROE MAXWELL* (age: 13-14)

Something so small

A far away land

The touch of a leathery hand

All moments must die

But in your memory they lie

Unfamiliar to some but known to most

Creeping through your head like a ghost

The tick and tock of a vintage clock

The pitter patter of bare feet across the wooden floor

Your mind runs like a car and opens like a door

The most unfamiliar sense is one we can't always seem to reach

It pulls back and forth like waves on the beach

For love is the most complicated thing of all

But can be found in something so small

Storm Warning

By **HAZEL WOODBRIDGE** (age: 18-21)

Now, I know you are probably going to laugh at me
But, being a tall girl is hard.
Think about it, I am 6 feet tall....
I was 5ft 10" in grade 5.
My mother once described me as an angry child, constantly in pain.
Waking up from a nap screaming, knees swollen red and inflamed.
By the time I was 6 I was too big for kiddie rides at carnivals.
The dragon ride was my favourite.
Everyone always assumed I was older.
To others it didn't matter.

I don't remember how old I was
When my father told me to stop wearing short shorts
Or, when my mother taught me to never make eye contact
With a man on the street
Or, when I was taught to use my keys like a knife
Or, when my body became too woman to warrant respect.
Last year, I was given a choice.
I could go to a halloween party, or a viking pit roast with a bunch of my mothers
friends
I chose the latter, I didn't want to risk anything bad happening.
It wasn't until a 35 year old man had his hand wrapped around my waist that I
realised my mistake.
A year later, at a graduation camping trip,
A boy I trusted decided to slide his hand up my thigh.
My pussy isn't yours to grab, and no the corn field doesn't look lovely in the
moonlight.
It wasn't until after
That my friend told me of everything he's done to her.....

When did my body begin to take up too much space, just by existing?
When did my body become a void for him to fill?
In that moment, I wasn't a woman anymore.
When did I become more drizzle than hurricane?
More static than lightning strike?
Well, know this now, your breath on my neck
Only builds the storm.
Every unwanted touch is kerosene,
Every whispered word a sparking ember,
And when this storm comes
You are going to watch this house go up in flames.
You had better watch out,
Because you aren't in Kansas anymore.

The Deep

By **HAZEL WOODBRIDGE** (age: 18-21)

There are some things out there that cannot be explained.
 Things behind locked doors, things behind moonlight.
 I can see your eye like a burning flame in the deep,
 Ever watching and unknowable, why do you come before me?
 The beasts of earth and stone, growling, scraping,
 Teeth biting at my hair.
 There is more than shadow in the dark places of the world.

Show yourself, creature! Why now do you hide at the edges of my sight?
 You have no power over me, for I am the master of my fear.
 I do not fear the dark, only that which dwells in it and you are nothing more than
 twilight gloom.
 I can feel your breath in my hair, on the back of my neck, against my cheeks.
 Ice and poison are in your blood,
 I can taste the iron blades of my tongue on your stone flesh.
 All things fade and wither, and all memory of you will disappear into shadow
 Where not even the palest starlight can reach you.

I am mortal, my life is fleeting before your eternity
 I will run red, growing into the earth before your eyes
 While you remain nothing but ash, lurking behind candle flame.
 Steel on steel.
 Teeth on teeth.
 When my light last burns with the sun,

You

Will

Crumble

The Players

By *HAZEL WOODBRIDGE* (age: 18-21)

Shakespeare once said that all the world's a stage,
and we are merely the players.

The performance of a lifetime,
glossy scripts, little coffee tables, and dentists offices.

Lovely Ophelia and sweet Juliet becon us forward,
Inviting us into the floodlights.

Why do girls always die in Shakespeare?

Our very own globe theatre, a rose by any other name would smell
as sweet.

We try our best to drown out the screams with soliloquy, bitches die
every day.

We are in close quarters.

Grease paint and khol can't hide everything.

Suddenly I am not in fair Verona, I am in front of you.

You can see the shadows of my eyes.

There are no violets here, just hollow skin.

You can see the scar on my cheek, the chip on my front tooth,

You lose interest.

Shakespeare wrote of humanity,

So why are we so disgusted by humans?

Unrequited

By JAQI HINKLE - @jaqi_art (age: 15-17)

Isn't it cruel that when I hear the word love I think of you?
That you are the only comparison I have?
When people talk about this amazing, magical feeling
I remember all the times I cried over you
and think
That must be the same thing.

I imagine a future with someone
Waking up next to them
And I can't picture any face but yours.

You're the only one I've ever imagined
So now you are the fixed point on the horizon
My True North
The path I'm meant to take.
Or whatever.

Maybe now I'm realizing the map wasn't made for me
And that following the horizon for so long means that now, when I've
turned around
I find myself lost in the open ocean.
I've searched for True North and sure, I found it.
But it's a cold, lonely wasteland and
The compass is spinning and spinning and
I can't find my way home.

I know you would hate the metaphor about being lost in the ocean.
I know you.
I know your greatest fears.
I also know mine.
Mine is that one day you'll realize you can just walk away.
And I'll have to learn to find my way on my own.
And maybe that's what I need.
Doesn't make it any less scary.
Less heart-wrenching.

Just because you're the only person I've ever been in love with
Doesn't mean I still am.
But now
I can't imagine love looking any different than
Holding hands with someone who doesn't think about me that way
Finally getting that kiss
In a lucky round of spin the bottle
Silent words: "I like you more than a friend"
Shouted in my head during every conversation
But never out loud because
The moment isn't right, we're busy, I don't want to make things
awkward.

You are the only person I've had that with.
So every time I hear the word love
I think about not being loved back.

I'm not in love with you any more
Promise.
Maybe I never was.
I still love you, though
And know you feel the same.
At least now the feelings are mutual
Just not in the way I'd always dreamed of.

I'm acting like this poem is about you
But even I know it's about me.
I just wish it hadn't been you.
If only my heart had been broken by someone
Who at least claimed it in the first place.

So for now I will remember love as
Tears and wishes that don't come true.
It's all I know, and
I'm just afraid that I won't recognize the real thing
When it smacks me in the face.

Until Then

By *OWG* (age: 18-21)

I never understood the expression
“A person that feels like home”
Until I met you.

In your arms, I’ll find redemption,
“With you, I never feel alone.”
Until I lost you.

~~~

## Untitled

By JAMIE (age: 13-14)

On Ashwood road, Xavier Rivers rests in his home.  
Glistening red stripes painfully adorned his arm.  
Tears flow down his face, and he is ashamed.  
He doesn't want to cry.  
He shouldn't be feeling this way.  
So he wipes away his tears, and covers his wounded arm.  
When he exits the washroom, a very convincing smile is once again pasted on his face.

A few doors down, Wren Smith's screams are muffled by her father's hand, which is clamped over her mouth.  
His other hand roams Wren's body; she tries to squirm away, but he's too strong.  
This isn't the first time, and it surely won't be the last.

Outside Wren's window, Gavin Shields makes his way home, the street lamps harshly illuminating his dark skin.  
A cop car is parked across the street, and its owner leans against it, his cold blue eyes briefly meeting Gavin's warm ones.  
In a few moments, Gavin would be pushed to the ground and kicked mercilessly.  
He would return home late that night, beaten and bruised.

And in the morning, Ashwood Road would be silent.  
The red slashes on Xavier's arm would catch his boyfriend's eye.  
Wren's sister would notice that she was unusually quiet, and Gavin's mother would notice her son's bruised skin.

And when the friends and family of these people would ask, "are you ok?"  
They would all receive the same lie:

"Yes."

And so silence fell once more on Ashwood Road.



## We Are All Temporary

By *N.O.CON* - @*n.o.con* (age: 15-17)

The harder you squint,  
Is the less that you see.  
The void is vast, my dear,  
And knows no courtesy.  
No matter how long you search,  
The meaning of life will remain a mystery.  
An eternity long pageant  
Of talent and popularity,  
Where the losers are lost forever  
And the only prize is mortality.  
Even autumns gifts will  
Fade and die by January.  
We only have so long  
To write our names into history.  
But only time,  
can turn a page  
And nurse your pain into a symphony.